

Israel arrests five Palestinians, Jihad members

BETHLEHEM (AFP) — The Israeli army arrested five Palestinians, including four alleged members of Islamic Jihad, in a pre-dawn raid on a village near Bethlehem Tuesday. Palestinian security sources said. Israeli soldiers raided the West Bank village of Abdeya and arrested the five men from their homes, the security sources said. Four of the detainees were suspected of links to Islamic Jihad, while the fifth was a member of a small Islamist party, Al Tahrir. The Palestinian from Tahrir and one of the four Jihad members were imams (clerics) in leading mosques in Abdeya, the sources said. The Israeli army has arrested hundreds of members of Jihad and the larger Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in a crackdown launched after a pair of Hamas bombings in Jerusalem.

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Israeli soldiers shoot Palestinian in Bethlehem

BETHLEHEM (AFP) — A Palestinian teenager was critically injured by an Israeli bullet when clashes broke out between youths and soldiers in Bethlehem Tuesday, hospital sources said. Ali Mohammad Jawarish, 14, was shot in the forehead by a rubber-coated bullet fired by Israeli soldiers guarding Rachel's Tomb after they were pelted with stones by Palestinian youths, witnesses said. The bullet entered Jawarish's brain, leaving him in critical condition, said officials in Bethlehem's hospital. The clashes occurred while Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai was at the tomb, located about a kilometre inside the self-rule town of Bethlehem to inaugurate completed renovations at the site.

Albright, Arafat to meet in Bern Saturday

BERN (AFP) — A meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and President Yasser Arafat on Saturday will take place in Bern and not Geneva, a foreign affairs ministry spokesman said Tuesday. The time and place of Ms. Albright's meeting with President Arafat, aimed at breathing life into the Middle East peace process, have not been confirmed. But their talks will take place in Bern, and not Geneva as originally scheduled, spokesman Livio Zanolari said.

Cabinet approves publishing secret report on Rabin killing

TEL AVIV (AP) — In response to persistent rumours that the Shin Bet security service played a role in the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet decided Monday to allow publication of parts of a secret report on the killing. Meanwhile, a poll broadcast on Channel 2 TV found almost one in five Israelis — 18 per cent — believe the assassination was the result "of a conspiracy."

U.S. embassy in Syria threatened — State Department

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. embassy in Damascus, Syria, received a phone call threatening retaliation against its staff if Washington took any action against Iraq, the State Department said late on Monday. The department said in a statement the threat was specifically directed against the U.S. diplomatic mission and its staff, not against private citizens. The embassy did not have further information suggesting a threat to official or private U.S. citizens in Syria, the department said, but given the current tensions over Iraq, it warned the American community in the country of "the continuing need to be aware of security concerns."

U.S. unhappy at Kuwaiti purchase of Chinese guns

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States expressed disapproval on Monday of a decision by Kuwait to buy Chinese howitzers, saying it wished the Gulf state had bought Western guns instead. Kuwaiti Defence Minister Sheikh Salem Sabah Salem Al Sabah said in a written response to parliamentary questions that Kuwait's supreme defence council had decided on the Chinese guns in a deal possibly worth \$200 million.

Regent receives EU delegation, hails Europe's efforts for peace

Poos says association agreement to be signed this month

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, met on Tuesday with the visiting delegation of the European Union Council, headed by the minister of foreign affairs of Luxembourg, Jacques Poos, and discussed with them recent developments in the Mideast peace process and Iraq.

The Crown Prince emphasised the need to pursue efforts to advance peace making and implement agreements reached so far in order to launch final status negotiations.

He expressed Jordan's appreciation of Europe's role to push forward peace in the Middle East, Jordan Television reported.

He spoke in this regard of the letter Luxembourg foreign minister has sent to U.S. secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, which restated Europe's position regarding the peace process by reaffirming the terms of reference of the Madrid peace conference and the security council's resolutions 242, 338 and 425 and the land for peace formula.

Mr. Poos said that his talks with Jordanian officials focused on the stalemate in the peace process, EU-Jordan relationship and announced that the European Union (EU) and Jordan will sign the partnership agreement this month.

"I am happy to announce that we will sign, by the end



Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jacques Poos, the current holder of the European Union presidency, talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs Faysal Tarawneh at Amman airport Tuesday. Mr. Poos arrived in Amman for talks on the Mideast peace process (Reuters photo)

of this month, the (association) agreement with Jordan. We made best efforts during the Luxembourg presidency to achieve this negotiations. We succeeded and I hope that my colleagues will come to Brussels to sign," Mr. Poos said upon his arrival at Marka Airport.

Mr. Poos, who met with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Foreign Minister Faysal Tarawneh, said that the EU has no "new" initiative to remove the logjam in the talks between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel.

The European official said that he will discuss with Jordanian officials "a new European role, a political role of

Europe in this region where we have a strong financial presence. We want to help all the efforts made by the international community to bring a just and durable peace."

"We will discuss also how to bring the peace process back on track again and how to restore confidence and resume the negotiations on the crucial issues," he said.

"We know that Jordan had played a very important role by helping the peace camp, [but] it has not been paid back properly for its good efforts and courage," said Mr. Poos, whose country chairs the EU's Council this year. He added that EU countries will work in the direction of increasing its economic

assistance to the Kingdom.

The EU delegation also includes Enrico Cioffi, director general of external relations of the European Commission, and the EU special envoy to the Middle East Miguel Angel Moratinos.

Mr. Poos said that he discussed with Jordanian officials the escalation in tensions between Iraq and the United States over Baghdad's refusal to allow American experts to join U.N. inspection teams in Iraq.

"We cannot avoid to discuss the Iraqi issue. Iraq is a big neighbour of Jordan and what happens in Iraq is also influencing very greatly this country and its economy," Mr. Poos added.

Majali says King's medical test results 'very good'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali announced at a regular Cabinet session Tuesday that the results of the medical check-ups which His Majesty King Hussein underwent at the Mayo Clinic in the U.S. were very good and extremely reassuring.

Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi, who made the announcement following the Cabinet session, said that the prime minister learnt of the results in a telephone conversation with the King adding that "we would like to reassure the Jordanian people that the King enjoys perfect health."

Dr. Mutawi said while in the U.S., King Hussein is scheduled to meet President Bill Clinton in Washington to discuss the latest developments in the peace process and the current crisis between the U.S. and Iraq.

He said that Jordan is keen on ending the sufferings of the Iraqi people and wants to see Iraq implementing all U.N. Security Council resolutions.

According to Dr. Mutawi

the King will visit London on his way back home for a meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Jordan earlier had asked the Security Council to establish a "time limit" for removing economic sanctions on Iraq, according to a report Tuesday in the daily Al Aswat.

The paper quoted Foreign Minister Faysal Tarawneh as saying that it was necessary to "define a time limit for lifting the sanctions which have been in place for seven years."

"Jordan also calls for the need for the Security Council to establish clear instructions regarding the meaning of Iraq's complete cooperation with the Special Commission (for disarmament of Iraq), added Dr. Tarawneh.

He reiterated Jordan's opposition to further sanctions on Baghdad saying that any such action would "set the crisis ablaze."

Meanwhile, the 12 Jordanian opposition political parties held a meeting at the headquarters of the Islamic Action Front Party Tuesday to review the situation in Iraq. Jamil Abu Bakr, spokesman

son of the Muslim Brotherhood, announced after the meeting that the "opposition groups will be meeting again to decide on a plan of action in this regard."

He said that representatives of the opposition parties have visited the Egyptian embassy and the Iraqi embassy to convey their views on the Iraqi situation.

Mr. Abu Bakr announced that the opposition groups plan to send a delegation to Baghdad in a show of solidarity with its people and to denounce the U.S. threats against the Iraqi nation.

"The opposition political parties condemn the U.S. barbaric aggression on the Iraqi people and demand that all Arab states end their side-differences and express their solidarity with Iraq to safeguard the nation and the Arab world's national interests," said Mr. Abu Bakr.

He said that the political parties "will send out memoranda to a number of Arab countries to exercise pressure on the U.S. to refrain from launching an act of aggression against Iraq."

Regent tells Israeli people 'firm commitment, bold action' immediately required

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, has said that Jordan will continue to assist in creative thinking for the establishment of regional dialogue that can push the peace process towards the attainment of comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

But what is immediately required, said Prince Hassan in a speech broadcast via satellite to a ceremony marking the second anniversary of the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in Tel Aviv Monday evening, "is a firm commitment and bold action on all sides to restart the negotiations in earnest."

The international community must support the parties in their efforts to bring about comprehensive peace, Prince Hassan told the ceremony in which former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and other world and Israeli personalities participated. Noting the devastating consequences which the Middle East has suffered as a result of prolonged conflicts, the Crown

Prince said that Arabs and the Israelis have no



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(Continued on page 7)

Iraq keeps up defiance, says it is ready for military attack

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq blocked U.N. inspectors from weapons sites and warned it could sever all links with an arms watchdog on Tuesday, shrugging off threats of new sanctions or a U.S. military strike.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf said Baghdad was ready to defend itself if Washington resorted to military action to resolve an almost two-week-old showdown over arms inspections.

"We have taken all preventive measures to defend the people and the country against any U.S. attack," he said. "We not looking for a confrontation...but if it is imposed on us, we will defend our country and we will be up to the task."

In the latest incident, Alan Dacey of the U.N. arms monitoring centre in Baghdad said a team of inspectors was told it could enter a site but not with

their U.S. colleagues.

The arms experts said Iraq's condition was "in contravention of relevant [U.N.] Security Council resolutions" and returned to base, together with three other inspection teams which had not yet reached their sites, he said.

On Monday, inspectors took a "day off" and did not venture out to sites following seven straight days of being turned back by Iraqi authorities.

The break came as the U.S. flew a spy plane over Iraq for the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) which is in charge of disarming the country under a mandate from the Security Council.

The flight by high-altitude U-2 reconnaissance plane took place without incident despite Iraqi threats to shoot it down.

(Continued on page 7)

In ongoing war of words, Aziz charges Albright is 'liar'

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz fired the latest salvo in Baghdad's war of words with Washington here late Monday, calling U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright a liar.

Asked shortly before a Security Council meeting on Iraq about Ms. Albright's weekend description of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein as a "congenital liar," Mr. Aziz retorted that "the persons who accuse the others, those are the liars."

To a reporter asking whether he meant that Ms. Albright was a liar, the Iraqi envoy replied "I hope she wouldn't be [a liar], but unfortunately she is."

Mr. Aziz's comments came as Washington and Baghdad sparred over Iraq's decision to expel U.S. members of a U.N.

Special Commission charged with overseeing Iraqi disarmament, UNSCOM.

Washington's U.N. ambassador, Bill Richardson, reacted angrily to Mr. Aziz's comments, declaring the Iraqi's statement "personally offensive" and "degrading to the dialogue in the U.N."

Mr. Aziz "insulted the secretary of state, that's calling names," Mr. Richardson told reporters before a Security Council meeting to determine a response to Baghdad's refusal to back down from its decision to expel U.S. members of UNSCOM.

The Iraqi official has "no excuses" and his comments are "typical" of Baghdad, said Mr. Richardson, adding "Aziz has said he came to the U.N. to dialogue, but for him that means defiance."

PNA rejects Israeli proposal to freeze withdrawal

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — A top Palestinian National Authority (PNA) negotiator said Tuesday the PNA rejected an Israeli proposal to discuss slowing down Jewish settlement activity in return for putting off further Israeli pullbacks in the occupied West Bank.

"Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and the Israeli delegation proposed at the Washington talks last week to move talks on further redeployments to the agenda of the final status negotiations," said top PNA negotiator Saeb Erekat.

"Abu Mazen [chief PNA negotiator Mahmoud Abbas] totally rejected this proposal and told [U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine] Albright and her team that the interim peace deals were sacred and he demanded a clear commitment on [their] implementation," Mr. Erekat told Reuters.

Under the interim agreements, Israel is committed to carrying out further redeployments from mostly rural areas of the West Bank by mid-1998.

Mr. Erekat said Mr. Abu

Mazen demanded the immediate establishment of a U.S.-Israeli-PNA committee to determine the scope of the withdrawals.

Israeli-PNA talks have been in crisis since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu began building a Jewish settlement on Arab land in east Jerusalem eight months ago. The deadlock was deepened by suicide bombings by Islamists that killed 24 Israelis.

Israel had made further troop pullbacks in the West Bank conditional on a PNA

crackdown on Islamist groups.

"Now they want to freeze all stages of further redeployments and say they are willing to discuss not a time-out but slowing down of settlement activities only if we accept to delay talks on withdrawals to final status talks," Mr. Erekat said.

"After four days of futile discussion, we ended up without even an agreement on the basis of negotiations on the crucial issues of further redeployments and cessation of 'settlement activities,'" he said.

El Al lands in Aqaba for first time

AMMAN (J.T.) — An Israeli El Al airliner heading for southern Israel landed at Aqaba Airport on Tuesday marking the first step towards the eventual building of a joint airport between Aqaba and Eilat as outlined in the Jordan-Israel 1994 peace treaty.

The plane flying from St. Petersburg in Russia carried 107 passengers on board, according to Ahd

Quntar, director of the Royal Wings, a subsidiary of Royal Jordanian (RJ), the national air carrier.

According to Mr. Quntar the landing was in implementation of a Jordanian-Israeli accord initiated last August allowing Aqaba Airport, which came to be known as the Peace Airport, to be used by Israeli planes.

The accord allows planes

headed for the Israeli resort of Eilat to land in Aqaba, according to Mr. Jasser Zayyad, director of the Jordanian Civil Aviation Authority, who said that the pilot project planned to last four months, will be tested regularly, reevaluated and modified if necessary.

Mr. Quntar said that Royal Wings which held a

(Continued on page 7)

U.N. rights body tells Israel to answer on torture charges

GENEVA (R) — United Nations experts on Tuesday expressed continuing concern about allegations of Palestinians being tortured in Israel and said they had written to the government again seeking its response to the allegations.

The U.N. Committee Against Torture, composed of 10 independent experts, who last May called on the Jewish state to stop alleged torture by Shin Bet secret police, said the situation "continued to deteriorate."

The committee had asked Israel to submit a report by Sept. 1 so it could be considered during its semi-annual talks which opened in Geneva on Monday. It has now asked Israeli authorities to submit their delayed report by May.

"Committee experts said they had received well-founded information about cases of torture in Israel. They said that the situation there was a source of concern as it continued to deteriorate," a committee state-

ment on Monday's debate reported.

Last May, the committee called on Israel to stop interrogating Palestinian detainees with methods including sleep deprivation and violent shaking as they constituted torture and broke international law.

Israel's delegation rejected the allegations at the time, saying its general security service forces (Shin Bet) did not use torture or methods tantamount to torture while interrogating suspected terrorists.

Israel had been due to file the report on its compliance with the Convention Against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment a year ago. It is one of 104 countries to have ratified the 1987 pact.

Youssef Lamdan, Israeli ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva, had written to the committee saying there would be a further delay in submitting the report, the statement said.

But the committee added:

"The experts said that there was no justification for a further delay in the submission of the second report."

"They added that it was high time that Israel be notified of the committee's frustration on the subject and decided to address a letter to Israel requesting it to submit its report before its next meeting in May."

Last May, the committee also expressed concern that a decision by the Israeli supreme court in November 1996 had the effect of sanctioning some of the interrogation practices.

It said the torture pact, an international instrument, ruled out invoking exceptional circumstances such as terrorism as justification for cruel treatment.

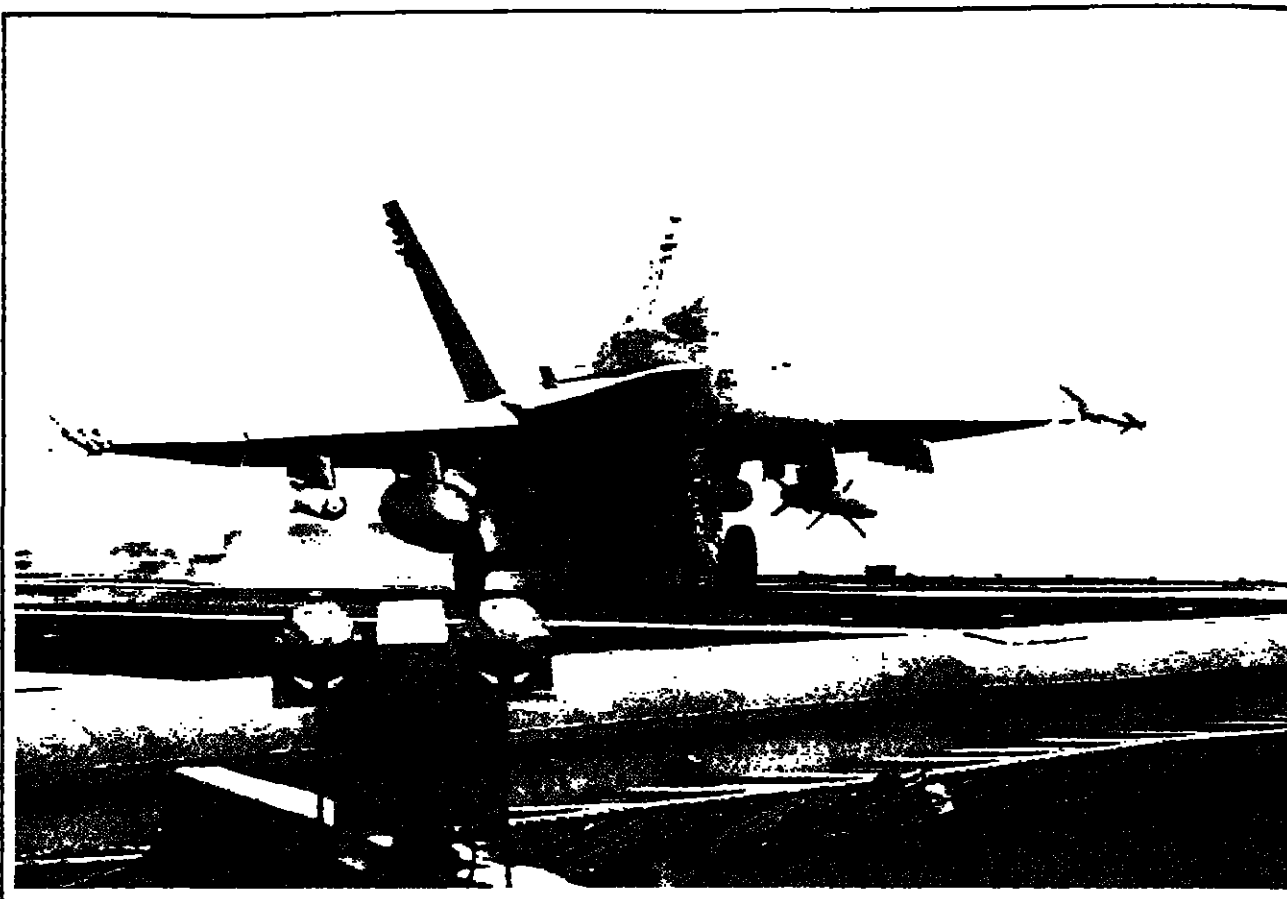
Nili Arad, director-general of Israel's justice ministry, told the committee at the time that her country was in a constant struggle to strike a balance between protecting innocent civilians from terrorist violence while also

respecting human rights including those of terrorists under investigation.

Applying "moderate use of physical pressure" during some interrogations, allowed under Israel's Landau commission rules, had helped investigators to foil 90 plans for large-scale terrorist attacks, she added. Methods did not amount to torture.

But the committee listed seven interrogation methods which "appear to be applied systematically" and said Israel had neither confirmed or denied their use. Thus, the committee said it assumed them to be accurate.

Israeli practices reported by groups including Amnesty International include: Restraining people in very painful conditions, sounding of loud music for prolonged periods, sleep deprivation, threats including death threats to the victim and others violent shaking and using cold air to chill detainees.



PATROLLING NO-FLY ZONE: Hornet fighter-bomber assigned to strike Fighter Squadron One Four Seven (VFA-147) launches from one of the four steam-driven catapults on the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz, Tuesday. The Hornet is armed with AIM-9 Sidewinder short range air-to-air missiles, RIM-7M radar guided Sea Sparrow air-to-air missiles, Rockeye cluster bombs, and the AGM-88 High Speed Anti-Radiation Missile (HARM), used as an air-to-ground weapon to seek out and destroy enemy radar equipped air defense systems. Nimitz and her air wing are currently in the Gulf to support U.N. sanctions against Iraq, by patrolling the southern no-fly zone under operation Southern Watch (Reuters photo)

Oman denies it has decided to attend Doha conference

MUSCAT (AFP) — Oman denied Tuesday a newspaper report that it has already decided to participate in next week's regional economic conference in Doha.

"The Sultanate of Oman has not yet decided about its participation" in the Nov. 16-18 conference, the official Omani News Agency (ONA) said.

The agency, quoting the secretary general of Oman's foreign ministry, Hantham Ibn Tareq Said, added that "the Omani government is currently studying the question and will announce its decision when appropriate."

Earlier Tuesday, the same official was quoted by the semi-official newspaper Al Watan as saying that "the Sultanate of Oman will participate in the Doha conference, and the make-up of the delegation will be decided later."

Jordan, Kuwait and Yemen have said they will attend the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic conference which opens Sunday.

PNA security chiefs jockeying to succeed Arafat — Al Hayat

NICOSIA (AFP) — The heads of the Palestinian security services are building up for a "battle" to succeed Palestinian National Authority (PNA) President Yasser Arafat in case he falls ill or dies, the Arab daily Al Hayat reported Tuesday.

The leading Arab daily pointed specifically to Jibril Rajub, head of the Preventive Security Services in the West Bank, saying he was building political alliances and arming his followers ahead of a "battle for succession."

Al Hayat said Mr. Rajub's counterpart in the Gaza Strip, Mohammad Dahlan, was making similar moves.

Between the two, other security chiefs such as military intelligence head Musa Arafat, National Security's Saeb Ajaj and police General

Ghazi Jabali are jockeying for influence, the paper said, citing sources in President Arafat's Fatah faction of the PLO.

The health of President Arafat, as well as the question of succession, has been a taboo subject for Palestinian officials, who have categorically denied repeated rumours that the 69-year-old leader is ill.

The rumours were fuelled by several appearances by President Arafat in which he seemed exhausted, agitated and trembling in his hands, legs and lower lip.

Doctors have said the trembling could suggest Parkinson's syndrome, which would not affect Mr. Arafat's mental faculties in the short-term.

President Arafat himself has dismissed speculation on his health as "stupid rumours."

Fatah sources cited by Al Hayat warned that with security chiefs competing for "post-Arafat" positions, the situation "could explode within several months and even take the form of political assassinations."

Mr. Rajub has found a chief ally in Ghassan Shakaa, the mayor of the West Bank self-rule town of Nablus.

A large arms shipment valued at some \$40,000 was recently intercepted en route to the West Bank town of Ramallah, where they were to be distributed to Mr. Rajub's supporters, the paper said.

Mr. Rajub visited Washington in late October, a visit which Al Hayat said the U.S. administration had arranged in order to "sound out" the security chief.

Protest wave in Algeria, France provokes criticism

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algeria's Union Confederation (UGTA) dealt a blow to opposition parties' plans for a general strike Wednesday to protest last month's election results.

In a statement Tuesday, the UGTA condemned the strike and appealed for "respect for republican order" during the planned demonstration against October's local elections which the opposition claims were a "massive fraud."

Protests of a more general nature in France on Monday to show solidarity with strife-hit Algeria drew criticism from the Algerian daily Le Matin, while the rest of the country's press ignored the march.

But organisers in Paris of the "Day for Algeria" said the event represented the biggest mobilisation in France since unrest broke out in its former colony five years ago. A civil war between the Algerian authorities and Islamist insurgents has killed some 65,000 people since it began in 1992 when the military cancelled elections the now-

banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was set to win. Last month's local elections, which appeared to show wide support for the ruling military regime, were hailed by President Liamine Zeroul as "an historic event" which would help end the bloody conflict rippling through Algeria.

Accusations of vote-rigging came immediately from six opposition parties, sparking a wave of protest which has united thousands of Algerians against the results.

Wednesday's general strike is just one of a series of demonstrations in Algerian cities, some of which brought clashes between protesters and riot police.

President Zeroul largely ignored the protests, saying only that the matter must be decided by Algeria's judiciary and fixing December 25 as a date for elections to Algeria's new second house of parliament.

Against this backdrop of political unrest, the familiar pattern of slaughter in Algerian villages resumed after a relative calm surrounding

the October elections.

Three pro-government representatives elected in the local elections were assassinated in a roadblock ambush south-east of Algiers which was attributed to armed Islamists, the Arab-language daily El Khabar reported Tuesday.

Over the last two days, similar armed gangs were reported as having massacred at least 48 people near Blida, in the south and near Tlemcen to the west.

In Algerian newspapers Monday, an escaped villager described how an armed gang, swathed in black and wearing turbans, launched Saturday a midnight killing frenzy on H'malit, a village near Blida, leaving a trail of 26 burned and mutilated bodies.

In two incidents of slaughter at Tajmout, a village near the western city of Tlemcen, 22 villagers were killed by a similar armed gang overnight Friday.

The mountainous region south of Algiers has been the scene of many of the worst slaughters since the Islamist insurgency flared-up in

1992.

The hardline Armed Islamic Group has claimed responsibility for many of the civilian attacks, as it vows to kill all those not supporting its fight against the military regime.

The armed wing of FIS, which also has a part in the killings, has adopted a unilateral ceasefire since Oct. 10.

Outside Algeria, pressure has been growing for an international inquiry into the slaughter, amid mounting speculation by the media over the possible involvement of sections of the Algerian security forces in the massacres.

In France, one of the main organisers of the solidarity day and former president of the League of Human Rights, Madeleine Reberoux, launched a petition for such an inquiry.

But President Zeroul recently reiterated that he would permit no "attempt to interfere" in his country's affairs, nor would he "accept lessons from anyone" when it came to human rights.

Israeli settlers say Shin Bet agents inciting youth against Arabs

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli settlers said Tuesday that their ranks have been infiltrated by agents from the Shin Bet internal security service whom they accused of engaging in anti-Arab provocations in the West Bank.

"We have found three agents Shin Bet planted among us in

recent years," Dov Weinstock, chief of security for the Gush Etzion settlements near the West Bank town of Bethlehem, told Israel Radio.

"They have incited youth from the settlements to carry out reprisals on Arab villages," he said. "These agents are committing provocations in

order to get information to pass on to their bosses."

Mr. Weinstock said that after they were exposed, two of the Shin Bet agents left the settlements but the third has remained although the settlers have painted "informant" on his house.

Shlomo Gal, head of the

Gush Etzion regional council, said that the settlers have not been hostile to the presence of informers in the settlements.

"But it's not acceptable for the informers to incite criminal acts to gather intelligence," he said.

The settlers made the announcement amid revela-

tions over the alleged role of right-wing Shin Bet agent Avishai Raviv in the 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Secret portions of an official report on Mr. Raviv's activities related to the assassination are to be published Wednesday.

Israel accuses PNA officials of car thefts

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel accused officials of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) Tuesday of involvement in a booming traffic in cars stolen from Israel and dismantled or sold in the autonomous Palestinian areas.

"When they want to, some PNA officials can find and return stolen cars, which proves that they are implicated in illegal activities," said Danny Naveh, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet secretary.

"We demand that the PNA do everything in its power to battle this problem, which is reaching unbeliev-

able proportions," Mr. Naveh said on Israel Radio. Mr. Naveh spoke after the recovery by Palestinian police this weekend of a stolen car belonging to Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, spiritual leader of the powerful ultra-Orthodox party Shas.

Rabbi Yosef's car was stolen from in front of his home in occupied Jerusalem Saturday night and found Sunday in a village near the West Bank city of Hebron which is under joint Israeli-Palestinian control.

Police sources said PNA President Yasser Arafat intervened personally to ensure the recovery of the rabbi's car.

Although Shas is a member of Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing coalition government, Rabbi Yosef supports the Oslo peace process and Palestinian self-rule.

Israeli police say that car thefts involving joint Israeli-Palestinian crime rings have soared 30 per cent this year and that by year's end a record 45,000 cars will have been stolen in Israel.

The problem has reached such a level that the Israeli cabinet has held special discussions on how to halt car thefts and the issue has been brought up in high-level Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

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PROGRAMME TWO

14:10.....Jonny Quest
14:30.....Super Dave
15:00.....Secrets of Treasure Island
15:30.....Spell Binder
15:40.....Monsters Today
16:10.....Border Town
16:30.....Neighbours
17:00.....French Programmes
19:00.....News in French
19:30.....News Headlines
19:35.....Doc. — High Tech Culture
20:00.....Comedy — Some One Like Me
20:30.....Challenges
21:10.....Kung Fu
22:00.....News in English
22:30.....Land's End
23:15.....American Gothic

PRAYER TIMES

04:37.....Fajr
05:57.....(Sunrise)Duba
11:20.....Dhuhr
14:17.....Asr
16:43.....Maghreb
18:02.....Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swetfieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.

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Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622666

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Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.

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The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

It will be fine, clouds appearing at low altitudes, and winds northwesterly moderate.

In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman09/20

Aqaba16/26

Deserts08/21

Jordan Valley14/27

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 19, Aqaba 25 Humidity readings: Amman 46 per cent, Aqaba 42 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Mazen Nibali830435

Dr. Fayez Dabbas759155

Dr. Adnan Zaghloul898140

Dr. Fakher Bilbeisi552235

Firas pharmacy661912

Ferdows pharmacy890280

Al Asema pharmacy637055

Al Salam pharmacy636730

Yacoub pharmacy644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

Nairoukh pharmacy623672

Najib pharmacy847632

Dr. Mazen Abu Bakr276852

Al Quds pharmacy(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Mazen Safarini985832

Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111.

637777

Fire Brigade617101

Blood Bank775121

Highway Police843402

Traffic Police896390

Public Security Department 630321

Hotel Complaints605800

Price Complaints661176

Water and Sewerage Complaints897467

Amman Municipality Complaints787111

Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Jordan Television773111

Radio Jordan774111

Water Authority680100

Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity, 644281/6

637777

Alkileh Maternity, 642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6

Italian, Al-Mahajrees 77101/3

Al-Bashir,775111/26

Army, Marka891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555

Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275

Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital (03)814111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or 08(53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

07:25Damascus (RJ)

08:05Larnaca (RJ)

08:35Jeddah (RJ)

09:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

16:35Frankfurt (RJ)

16:50Istanbul (RJ)

17:05Paris (RJ)

17:45Madrid, Geneva (RJ)

17:50Brussels, Vienna (RJ)

18:10London, Berlin (RJ

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Francophone club seeks to join world's top league

HANOI (R) — When La Francophonie elects its first secretary-general at a three-day summit in Hanoi this week, the 49 members of French-speaking states hope their club will graduate to the level of a world-class organisation.

Barring a last-minute upset, the new job looks likely to go to former United Nations chief Boutros Ghali.

"We are on the way to a more institutionalised Francophonie, one which is better recognised on the international scene and which carries greater weight," Vietnam's assistant foreign minister, Ton Nu Thi Ninh, told Radio France Internationale ahead of the Nov. 14-16 summit.

Among the aims of the Hanoi meeting is the completion of institutional reform to give La Francophonie greater visibility and political impact.

"Hanoi will mark a turning point. It will be the coming of age," said Catherine Colonna, spokeswoman for French President Jacques Chirac, who is due to arrive in the Vietnamese capital Wednesday.

Events of the past — such as at the 1995 summit in Benin, when several African countries expressed their opposition to Nigeria's military regime — would suggest that the diverse group's ambitions may be hard to realise.

But Ms. Colonna said

Benin had taken the community to the first milestone of its political ambition by adopting 10 resolutions — the Hanoi summit would take it to the next one with a different approach with just two documents.

Rights group calls for summit pressure on Vietnam

HANOI (AFP) — An international rights group called on countries attending a summit of French-speaking nations this week to press for human rights.

The New York-based Human Rights Watch said in a statement that nations should urge Vietnam to release prisoners of conscience.

Other rights groups have made appeals in the lead-up to the summit, which will bring together leaders and top government representatives from almost 50 countries for the first time.

Human Rights Watch said France, main organiser of the summit and Vietnam's second largest aid donor, had a special responsibility to promote human rights in its bid to lead the summit.

While the Vietnamese government pursues the economic policy and continues to woo foreign investment, it should also be pressing for human rights reforms, the group said.

The group also urged nations to press for the release of political prisoners and the end of the use of force against peaceful protesters.

Highlighting the case of journalist and writer Doan Viet Hoa, who was jailed for 15 years in 1993, Human Rights Watch called for the unconditional release of all those held for political or religious reasons.

The organisation said foreign delegations and the press should raise specific cases and general human rights during the summit.

In their final statement, Francophone state leaders will pledge to work for the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts, while a plan of action will charge the new secretary-general with consolidating the rule

of law and democracy.

"These are the new directions. With this approach Francophonie will make a qualitative leap. It will no longer be just a group of programmes. It will also become a political arena," Ms. Colonna said.

La Francophonie has already held seven summits, but this will be its first in Asia, one of the most economically dynamic regions in the world.

Ms. Ninh said that one of the aims of the meeting was to boost the economic dimension of the grouping.

"The cultural and political purpose of Francophonie should be completed with a solid economic anchor, with a south-south relationship and not just north-south," she said.

"La Francophonie allows us to get back to the southern countries, particularly... to the Africans."

The plan of action will propose a meeting of finance ministers, support for small and medium-sized enterprises through creation of a 20-million French franc (\$3.51-million) fund, reinforcement of the legal environment, support for regional integration, training and technology.

French officials say that with this in mind, La Francophonie will set up a special programme with the aim of promoting information in French on the information super-highway.



British nanny Louise Woodward smiles with her attorney Elaine Whitfield-Sharp (left) at her side as they wait for Judge Hiller Zobel to announce his new sentence for Woodward during a sentencing hearing in a Cambridge courtroom (Reuters photo)

Judge changes British au pair's conviction, allows her to walk free

CAMBRIDGE.

Massachusetts (AFP) — A judge reduced Monday British au pair Louise Woodward's conviction of murdering a child in her care to manslaughter, ruling she had served enough jail time and allowing her to walk free.

"It is, in my judgement, time to bring the judicial part of this extraordinary matter to a compassionate conclusion," Judge Hiller Zobel said.

Earlier in the day, the judge softened the murder conviction to manslaughter, suggesting Ms. Woodward, 19, had no intent to kill.

Prosecutors, arguing the judge's decision was a gross miscarriage of justice, vowed to appeal.

"I don't think there was any justice for Matthew Eappen in that court room today," District Attorney for Middlesex County Tom Reilly said, referring to the infant Woodward was convicted of murdering 10 days ago.

Mr. Reilly called the judge's decision "an abuse of discretion," saying the deceased child's parents were "victims again."

A jury sentenced Ms. Woodward to life in prison after finding her guilty of murder in the February death of eight-month-old Matthew. Prosecutors had asked Judge Zobel at Monday's sentencing hearing to send Ms. Woodward to jail for at least 15 years under the new conviction, but Judge Hiller took the defence's side, sentencing her to the 279 days she had already served.

"I do not denigrate Matthew Eappen's death, nor his family's grief," said Judge Zobel on issuing his ruling. "Mercy does not lessen the opprobrium" of the felony.

In some quarters, the decision was as controversial as the jury verdict it intended to correct. Many attorneys and jurists voiced surprise, saying even the lesser charge of manslaughter warranted a longer prison sentence than the time Ms. Woodward had served.

Others argued her sentence should be lengthened because she never expressed remorse at Matthew's death.

But some legal experts such as David Robinson, professor of criminal law at George Washington University in Washington, said the judge was faced with a no-win case.

"It's a Solomonian decision," Mr. Robinson said. "The jury system is not absolute." Still, Mr. Robinson acknowledged that Judge Zobel's decision might raise legal doubts.

Ms. Woodward never expressed remorse for Matthew's death, as from the defence perspective, she cannot, if she plans to maintain innocence and continue to appeal her conviction.

But Judge Zobel found her guilty in causing his death — only to hand her the lightest possible punishment.

Legal experts said the judge's ruling was likely to stand, pointing out that appellate courts are reluctant to second-guess courtroom judges.

David Rossman, a professor of criminal law at Boston University, said the likelihood was "next to none" that an appellate court would agree with the prosecution's contention that Judge Zobel overstepped his authority.

Ms. Woodward cannot leave Massachusetts — much less return to her native Britain — while the prosecution appeals the sentence, the judge ruled.

In a brief statement to the judge at the sentencing hearing, the teenager calmly reiterated her plea of innocence.

"I just wanted to say what I said at the last sentencing hearing, that I'm innocent," Ms. Woodward said.

The young woman's parents nodded slightly when their daughter spoke, as they sat huddled in the same courtroom seats where they had watched their daughter two weeks ago be sentenced to life behind bars.

Sunil and Debbie Eappen, Matthew's parents, were not present at Monday's proceedings.

Mr. Rossman added that the judge's light sentence suggested that he believed much of the evidence presented by defence experts during trial.

In handing down the sentence, Judge Zobel said he took into consideration the same factors that led him to downgrade Ms. Woodward's conviction.

"I believe that the circumstances in which the defendant acted were characterised by confusion, inexperience, frustration, immaturity and some anger, but not malice (in the legal sense)," Judge Zobel wrote in a 16-page decision.

In reconsidering the jury's verdict, Judge Zobel had the choice of upholding it, freeing the young woman, calling for a new trial or reducing her conviction to involuntary manslaughter.

In February, Matthew, one of the two Eappen children in Ms. Woodward's care, was rushed to a hospital with a fatal skull fracture. He died after being in a coma for five days.

China slams bills passed by U.S. lawmakers

BEIJING (R) — Beijing Tuesday slammed what it described as anti-Chinese bills passed by U.S. lawmakers and labelled them as gross interference in China's internal affairs.

"We have taken notice that in recent days the U.S. House of Representatives... has passed a series of proposals with anti-Chinese content," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang told a news briefing.

"This is gross interference in China's internal affairs," Mr. Shen said. "We express our strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition to this."

Last Friday, the U.S. Congress voted to require the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to report annually on Chinese economic, political and military espionage in the United States.

It was one of a package of 11 bills under consideration which were intended to punish China for what

lawmakers said was aggressive behaviour and human rights abuses.

The China bills, in part the work of a special congressional task force, were written before Chinese President Jiang Zemin's state visit to the United States last week.

Nine of the bills must still go to the Senate and are unlikely to be debated before Congress winds up for the year in a few days.

Also Friday, the House of Representatives voted to deny normal commercial trade status to China's military. The lawmakers said the military was guilty of using slave labour to make products for export.

Mr. Shen said some members of Congress felt "uncomfortable" with Sino-U.S. ties improving and "resorted to every means to create some trouble and obstacles."

"These attempts would not succeed," the Chinese spokesman added. "Through President Jiang Zemin's visit this time, we

can see that the trend of the Chinese and American peoples' wish for friendship is unstoppable," he said.

The House of Representatives Thursday called on the White House to impose sanctions against China and Russia for selling advanced missiles and technology to Iran.

It also voted to deny U.S. visas to Chinese officials who head government-created religious groups and condemned Beijing for coerced abortions.

In addition, it passed a measure calling on the secretary of defence to study requirements for a theatre missile defence system that could protect China's rival Taiwan.

Another bill approved by the House would require the United States to oppose extending "concessional" loans to China by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Bosnia's Muslim leader rejects Croatian proposals

SARAJEVO (R) — The Muslim chairman of Bosnia's collective presidency, Alija Izetbegovic, has rejected a proposal from neighbouring Croatia to forge "special relations" between Croatia and the country's Muslim-Croat Federation, state radio reported.

"Reaffirming the readiness of Bosnia-Herzegovina for any form of cooperation with the Republic of Croatia based on equality," President Izetbegovic has rejected the draft proposals offered as violating the Dayton (peace) agreement and the integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the radio said Monday evening.

The report said Bosnia would draw up its own proposals for discussion.

Mr. Izetbegovic did not elaborate on his position but senior Muslim politicians had already signalled that Croatia's proposals to form a monetary and customs union with the Muslim-Croat Federation in Bosnia were problematic.

Apart from the monetary and customs union, Croatia had proposed that Zagreb and the federation agree on border controls between Bosnia and Croatia.

Western diplomats have criticised Mr. Tudjman's proposal as a distraction from negotiations between Croatia and Bosnia over the use of the Adriatic port of Ploce, an important link for Bosnian industry.

The Dayton Treaty, signed in Paris in 1995, divided Bosnia into two territories — the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Serb Republic — which are supposed to be ruled by a small central government.

A spokesman for the International High Representative to Bosnia, Carlos Westendorp, said Zagreb's proposal incorrectly assumed the federation could negotiate customs or monetary unions with foreign states without the approval of the multi-ethnic central government.

U.S. sends aid as Vietnam's typhoon misery mounts

HANOI (R) — The United States weighed in with relief supplies Tuesday for tens of thousands of people left homeless after a typhoon raked southern Vietnam earlier this month.

The U.S. military's announcement that it would ship tents, cots, blankets and first-aid kits valued at \$460,000 came as the death toll from the storm rose to 580 people.

Uncertainty persisted over the number of people still missing or unaccounted for, most of them fishermen who were caught out at sea in winds of up to 100 km per hour nine days ago.

A Reuters tally of figures from affected provinces put it at 1,451, though an official in one province said the number could be more than twice as high.

So far more than 5,600 people, some of whom clung to buoys or broken boat planks for days, have been plucked from the sea by patrolling ships or helicopters.

Saturday, Vietnam urged

neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines to join search and rescue operations.

It has sent out a worldwide appeal for funds to buy emergency food, medicine, clothing, shelter and sanitation for the tens of thousands left homeless by the storm's devastation.

Dang Quang Tinh, deputy director of the government department of dyke management and flood and storm control, told Reuters Monday that many of the homeless were vulnerable to diseases from impure drinking water, such as diarrhoea and typhoid.

He said that even the simplest of supplies for temporary shelters, such as plastic sheeting, were desperately needed.

Four United Nations agencies have made preliminary pledges of aid totalling \$255,000, while the governments of Switzerland, South Korea, Norway, the Netherlands, France, Britain and Australia have between

them have committed about \$770,000.

The United States, which normalised relations with its wartime enemy in 1995, does not have a formal aid programme for Hanoi but does give humanitarian relief.

The U.S. army Pacific command said in a statement that the relief supplies would be delivered to Ho Chi Minh city Wednesday from storage at Kadana U.S. air base in Okinawa, Japan.

We were able to put the shipment together quickly, and with a lot of help from the air force, we'll get it there in time to make a difference, said army Lt. Col. Steve Green.

The humanitarian mission follows a request for help from the U.S. embassy in Hanoi.

The office of foreign disaster assistance, an arm of the U.S. agency for international development, was also shipping plastic sheeting and 19-litre water containers to help victims of the typhoon.

Chechens give Islamic dress code cold reception

GROZNY, Russia (AFP) — Chechens largely ignored a government decree this week that all women must adopt a Muslim dress code, with many saying that formal Islamisation ran counter to Chechenya's deeply held Caucasus traditions.

The decree signed by Chechen Vice President Vakha Arsanov Saturday did not specify what women should wear, but said employers should make sure their employees respected Islamic traditions in their dress.

By Tuesday there was no visible difference in women's dress in the bustling centre of the capital Grozny, where hundreds of women trade in a market set among the devastated buildings.

Zarema Irskhanova, a 28-year-old teacher, said: "I don't quite understand what a woman dressed in Islamic law means. I see this as not respecting our traditions and customs."

"With the difficult economic situation in the republic after the war, I think there are many other problems to consider. I don't think the order will have any effect," she said.

The order was the latest of numerous attempts to install a more fundamentalist Islamic state in Chechenya, which won de facto independence from Russia in a brutal 21-month war ending last year, but has not been recognised.

The leadership of the tiny region, which lies astride a key oil pipeline from the Caspian Sea, has repeatedly stated its intention to create an Islamic republic.

But although Islam has a strong following in Chechenya, the religion has long been inextricably entwined with local traditions held long before the people's conversion to Islam, ranging from councils of elders to family blood feuds.

Another brake on fundamentalism in Chechenya is the effect of Russian and Soviet culture dating from Russia's conquest of the region 130 years ago.

Some see strict Islamic rules, even full Sharia law, as a way to stamp out the republic's appalling post-war crime rate. But many Chechens oppose the imposition of any foreign culture over their own.

Khamid Nazarov, a teacher, 45, pointed out that Chechen women traditionally dress modestly, but in their own way.

"Chechen women have never covered their face and do not know what a chador is. You can't imagine a Chechen woman wearing a veil," he said.

"An attempt to completely Arabise Chechen clothes is bound to fail. Chechens are neither Asiatic nor European. Asian strictness in clothing and European emancipation are both alien to them," he said.

However, some said that Islamisation of society could only help in a society where most of the population live in poverty and thousands of young veterans have weapons but no work.

"I welcome the order. As a Muslim, the priority is Allah. Allah wrote in the Koran what kind of clothes Muslim women should wear, whatever their nationality," said Arbi Vagapov, who teaches at the university.

"Chechen women have never worn the chador, but we need to bring Muslim and national traditions together. Our clothes makers must create an elegant, attractive style for Muslim women."

European court upholds discrimination in favour of women

LUXEMBOURG (AFP) — National or regional legislation which gives women priority over equally-qualified men for promotions in the public sector does not breach European law, the European Court of Justice ruled Tuesday.

The court rejected a claim by Hellmut Marschall, a German teacher, that he had been the victim of sex discrimination when he was passed over for promotion in favour of an equally-qualified female colleague.

The landmark judgement significantly reduces the scope of application of an October 1995 ruling by the court which had cast doubt on the legality of "positive action" programmes designed to promote balance in positions where women are under-represented.

Central to the court's decision was the fact that Mr. Marschall's employer, the regional government of North Rhineland Westphalia, did not automatically give priority to women — a practice which the court ruled illegal in its 1995 ruling.

Under the region's rules, women applying for jobs in which they are under-repre-

sented can expect priority over men of equal competence unless the man has specific circumstances, such as being a single parent or handicapped, which could tilt the balance in his favour.

This clause ensures that each candidate's application for a position is subject to an objective assessment and therefore not in breach of EU law, the court ruled.

In its judgement, the court recognised that male candidates will tend to be promoted over equally-qualified female colleagues. "Certain deep-rooted prejudices and stereotypes as to the role and capacities of women in working life still persist," the judgement said.

In light of this, priority given to women in order to restore the balance is not contrary to community law provided that the promotion of a man is not excluded from the start of the decision-making process.

Social Affairs Commissioner Padraig Flynn, who had proposed changes to EU legislation following the earlier ruling to ensure positive action programmes could continue, said he was "delighted" by Tuesday's decision.

Chemical castration considered for sex offenders

LONDON (AFP) — Convicted paedophiles could be "chemically castrated" under plans being drawn up by Britain's Prison Service, officials said Monday.

The service said in a statement that it was looking at the use of anti-libidinal drugs — which suppress sex drive — for sex offenders. It said they could be administered in conjunction with its existing psychological treatment programme for all sex offenders in jail.

But the service stressed that the programme would remain voluntary and treatment with the drugs required a prisoner's consent.

Britain's Labour government has already embarked on a campaign to clamp down on paedophiles.

It introduced a register on Sept. 1 for all convicted sex offenders. Those who fail to sign it can be fined up to 5,000 pounds (\$8,000) or jailed for six months.

Chechens give Islamic dress code cold reception

GROZNY, Russia (AFP) — Chechens largely ignored a government decree this week that all women must adopt a Muslim dress code, with many saying that formal Islamic dress is a sign of Islamisation and a counter to Chechnya's deeply held Caucasian traditions.

The decree signed by Chechen Vice President Akhmed Vassilov Saturday did not specify what women should wear, but said simply that they should make sure their employees respected Islamic traditions in their dress.

By Tuesday there was no visible difference in women's dress in the bustling centre of the capital, Grozny, where hundreds of women traded in the market and along the devastated buildings.

Zarema Iskhankhanova, a 25-year-old teacher, said she did not understand what a woman should wear in Islamic dress. She said she was not wearing a headscarf, but she was wearing a headscarf.

"We are not wearing a headscarf, but we are wearing a headscarf," she said.

The decree was part of a series of measures aimed at Islamising Chechnya after its 1991 declaration of independence. It came as the country's government sought to restore order and rebuild the economy after years of conflict.

Angola's government vows to make peace accords work

LUANDA (AFP) — Angola's government expressed its "firm" intention Monday to remove "all the obstacles that remain in the way" of the peace process and committed itself again to the 1994 Lusaka peace accords.

On the eve of the 22nd anniversary of Angola's independence, the government said in a statement released to the media Monday evening that the country had reached a "decisive moment" for its political future.

Since the country won independence from Portugal in 1975, 18 of the 22 subsequent years were lost to a bloody civil war pitting the ruling People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) against guerrillas of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

Though a peace accord was signed in the capital in 1994 by the two sides, real peace has remained elusive. MPLA and UNITA formed a Government of National Unity and Reconciliation (GURN) last April, including four ministers and seven deputy ministers from the guerrilla group, but it has been slow to take root.

Meanwhile the administrative reunification of the country, supposed to be done in parallel with the demobilisation of the remaining UNITA troops, has been proceeding at a snail's pace.

UNITA, unenthusiastic about loosening its grip on cities it controls in the centre, south and northeast of the country, has also been dragging its feet. In a statement Monday, the MPLA said it was in favour of "urgent demilitarisation" of UNITA forces, the failure of which presented the main obstacle to a durable peace.

The power however, also said that Mr. Savimbi should take up his rightful position in the capital though UNITA has questioned how safe the former rebel leader would be if he set up office in Luanda.

Angola's rocky road to political and administrative normalisation has taken its toll on economic reconstruction.

Unfettered movement of goods and people, simple on paper, is tortuous on main arteries subject to regular attack by armed groups with their own notions of territorial jurisdiction.

Living conditions in the capital Luanda, teeming with the homeless slots of civil strife, are abject. Energy and drinking water are scarce and getting scarcer.

On the eve of Angola's independence anniversary, the country that produces 700,000 barrels of crude oil every day does not have enough fuel to fill its own tank.

Luanda's refinery, pumping stations and generating plants lack the capacity to provide for the city whose population now tops three million.

Health and education services are practically nonexistent. Staff salaries run around \$40-50 a month.

Oil, Angola's principal source of foreign revenue, allows the country to survive, but only so. Oil cannot sustain an economy without infrastructure, without manufacturing, without agriculture.

Angola's industry, 16 per cent of gross domestic product before independence, has shrunk to six to seven per cent.

The country's seven million hectares of arable land, the largest in Africa, cannot feed its people.



Christie's Auction House Chairman Christopher Burge (left) takes bids on the auction sale of Picasso's 'Les Femmes d'Alger' of 1955 at Christie's in New York (Reuters photo)

New York art auction fetches record \$206 million

NEW YORK (R) — A collection of 20th-century art considered the most important ever offered at auction shattered the record for a single-owner sale, going for over \$200 million at Christie's Monday night.

The auction house characterised the single-session sale of the collection of Victor and Sally Ganz as "enormously in excess of anything we had hoped for." A record crowd of 2,000 prospective bidders packed four salesrooms.

Highlights of the sale included the \$48,402,500 paid for Pablo Picasso's "Le Réve" ("The dream"), a sensual portrait of Marie-Therese Walter, the artist's 22-year-old mistress and the eventual mother of his daughter.

It was the second-highest price ever paid for a Picasso, about \$4 million short of the price of "Les noces de Pierrette" ("Pierrette's wedding"). In all, 12 Picassos were sold for a total of \$164.2 million.

All prices include commissions.

"Le Réve" was the first piece acquired by the Ganzes, who bought it for \$7,000 in 1941. At one point they were the United States' largest private owners of Picassos.

During 50 years of collecting, the couple focused on a handful of artists, who included Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Frank Stella and Eva Hesse.

The auction of their modern paintings, mixed-media pieces, lithographs and sculptures easily surpassed the previous record for a single-owner sale: \$135.3 million collected over a number of sessions in 1989-90. Monday evening's final total was \$206,516,525.

Other top prices included the \$24,752,500 paid for Picasso's "Femme assise dans un fauteuil" ("Woman sitting in an armchair"), a record for a cubist painting, and the \$31,902,500 paid for version "O" of his 15-painting series "Les femmes d'Alger" ("The women of Algiers"), nearly three times its estimate.

Three other works in the same series went for \$17,152,500, \$7,262,500 and \$11,002,500.

Two Johns works, "White numbers" and "Corpse and mirror," fetched \$7,922,500 and \$8,362,500, respectively.

"Unfinished, untitled or not yet," a piece by Eva Hesse, a German-born American sculptor who lived from 1936 to 1970, was estimated to sell for between \$500,000 and \$700,000 but brought a heady \$2,202,500, a record for the artist.

Almost all the works went to buyers identified only as "anonymous" or to art dealers. One buyer was referred to as "private European."

The Ganzes' daughter Nancy was present and said she was pleased that the works would live on in many different places. Only five lots sold for less than their estimates.

Christie's had to double the capacity of its main auction room for the sale and added three additional rooms to accommodate prospective buyers. Telephone lines were doubled for bidders not there in person.

More than 25,000 people visited the auction house in recent weeks to view the collection, which had never previously been exhibited in its entirety. "Les femmes d'Alger" was displayed in a red gallery built to resemble the Ganzes' "red salon" in their Manhattan home.

The Ganzes kept a low profile socially and were not particularly wealthy. Victor Ganz worked in the family's costume jewellery business, and his wife worked at Macy's before their marriage.

But by all accounts, they had an unerring eye for talent and quality, being among the first to collect Johns, who became a good friend, and Stella. A typical Saturday afternoon would find them quietly poking around galleries.

After his retirement, Victor Ganz served as a trustee and vice president of the Whitney Museum. He died in 1987, and Sally Ganz bought only one painting after that, Johns' "Untitled," which sold Monday for \$550,000. She died in January.

South Korea ruling party merges with opposition

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea's ruling party was set Tuesday to merge with a small opposition party to bolster its chances in presidential elections next month.

But a rival urged the New Korea Party to quit the race to avoid splitting the conservative vote in the Dec. 18 election.

"As the deadline for registering presidential candidates is Nov. 26, we are hoping to hold the merger convention before that date," said Kim Tae-Ho, the NKP secretary-general.

The minor opposition Democratic Party headed by former Seoul mayor Cho Soon is expected to officially agree to a merger after a party meeting Wednesday.

The two parties are then expected to announce their decision to field a single candidate, the NKP's Lee Hoi-Chang, in the Dec. 18 polls. Cho Soon would bow out of the race and be given the post of party head.

The merger was a blow to Rhee In-Je of the New People's Party (NPP), who urged the NKP's Lee to withdraw from the race so as not to split the votes of conservatives.

"We are asking him to quit the race. If he quits, we are sure of winning the race and crushing candidate Kim Dae-Jung," a spokesman for the NPP told AFP.

"It would be great if he bows out and supports our party, but if he doesn't support us, we are asking him to step down. That is the only way to end the era of 'Three Kims'," he said.

The "three Kims" refer to President Kim Young-Sam, who is constitutionally barred from a second term, and two veteran opposition leaders Kim Dae-Jung and Kim Jong-Pil who have joined forces for the polls.

A survey conducted last week showed that if Cho Soon had merged with Rhee instead, he would have had a greater chance of winning the presidency against Kim Dae-Jung, currently the front-runner.

Since Cho Soon hinted last week that he would join with Lee Hoi-Chang, the NKP's campaign slogan has been "Clean Politics and Powerful Economy."

Mr. Lee has a strong "Mr. Clean" reputation and Cho Soon was formerly a respected professor of economics at the Seoul National University.

A survey released this week showed Kim Dae-Jung, head of the National Congress for New Politics (NCNP), still in the lead, with NPP's Rhee In-Je in second and Lee Hoi-Chang of the NKP third.

Commentators are unanimous that a split conservative vote would heighten Kim Dae-Jung's chance of winning, now he is backed under an earlier merger agreement, by the country's second largest opposition party.

Mr. Rhee, the youngest candidate, broke from the ruling NKP after the party chose Lee Hoi-Chang as its choice for president. Since then, dozens of NKP officials have defected to Mr. Rhee's new party, nicknamed by the opposition NCNP as "the prince's party."

The NKP and NCNP have accused Rhee of getting financial help from the president and his son Kim Hyun-Chul who was recently granted bail pending his appeal against conviction on charges of influence-peddling and tax evasion.

Mr. Rhee has denied the allegations and filed suits against the two parties.

AI appeals to Indonesia to return massacre bodies

CANBERRA (AFP) — Amnesty International marked the sixth anniversary of the Dili massacre with an appeal to Indonesia to return the bodies of all those killed and agree to a full and independent inquiry into the killings.

"Six years ago Wednesday, at least 100 and perhaps as many as 270 young East Timorese were killed or 'disappeared' after Indonesian troops opened fire on a peaceful demonstration in Dili," Amnesty said in a statement.

"The Indonesian government's failure to return the bodies of those killed to their families and to carry out a full and independent inquiry into the Santa Cruz killings weigh heavily on the people of East Timor."

"Amnesty International appeals to the Indonesian government to meet these basic requirements of truth and justice."

The human rights group said it believed the measures were essential to progress towards a genuine and lasting peace in East Timor.

Russian press laments poor trade links with China

MOSCOW (R) — Russian newspapers Tuesday printed pictures of Boris Yeltsin hugging China's Jiang Zemin but said the presidents' warm personal rapport could not hide the poor state of trade between the two giant neighbours.

Mr. Yeltsin arrived in China Sunday for a three-day state visit to bury the last vestiges of border hostility and revive stalled trade ties.

"A day of sad smiles in Beijing," read the headline in the liberal Nezavisimaya Gazeta.

"It is difficult to deny that today relations between Beijing and Moscow are characterised by mutual understanding and warmth," the daily said in a front-page article.

"At the current time there are some 200 agreements signed by the two countries but by no means all of them are being carried out. This fact introduced a certain note of sadness into the official smiles," it said.

An expected two-way trade volume this year of \$7 billion is regarded here as miserably inadequate considering the size of the two countries and falls far short of the \$20 billion the two governments had planned for the end of the century.

By contrast, China's trade with Japan last year reached \$60 billion and with the United States it was \$43 billion, according to Chinese figures.

"The more enthusiastic and richer Moscow's political dialogue becomes with its Chinese neighbours, the more paltry and pathetic our economic dialogue appears," said the Novye Izvestia daily in an editorial.

It said the two countries' much-lauded "strategic partnership" was largely confined to diplomatic documents.

Russian newspapers also complained of continuing Chinese restrictions on Russian imports, including fertiliser and steel.

The main economic achievement of Mr. Yeltsin's visit was a framework agreement on a \$12 billion project to build a pipeline to bring natural gas from Siberia to China's Pacific coast. Under the draft plan, gas would flow for 30 years, also supplying Japan and South Korea.

The other highlight of his trip was the signing of a declaration finally laying to rest wrangles over practical implementation of a 1991 accord mapping out the entire 4,300-km frontier between Russia and China.

Border tensions have flared on and off for several hundred years. In 1969 Red Army soldiers of the former Soviet Union fought skirmishes with Chinese People's Liberation Army troops on ice floes along frozen border rivers.

Yevgeny Nazdratenko, governor of the Primorsky (maritime) region and a fierce critic of the demarcation accord, was pointedly not among the four Russian regional governors invited to join the talks, the papers said.

Good personal ties between Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Jiang ensured their talks took place in a convivial atmosphere, the papers said.

Mr. Jiang once lived in the Soviet Union in the 1950s — before ties worsened amid rivalry for leadership of the Communist world. He is known to enjoy reading Russian literature and speaks some of the language.

Mr. Yeltsin's real motive in travelling to Beijing, according to the weekly Moskovskiy Novosti, was to flesh out his vision of a "multi-polar world" in which no single power — namely the United States — would be allowed to dominate.

"Boris Yeltsin is ready to cross five time zones in order not to yield any advantage to his friend Bill Clinton," it said.

5 arraigned in 'foxglove' poisonings

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — Five people were arraigned on charges they were part of a ring that romanced wealthy elderly bachelors to secure places in their wills, and then slowly killed them using a poison derived from the foxglove plant.

The five suspects were among eight people indicted by a grand jury last week and were charged with conspiracy to commit murder, elder abuse and fraud. They did not enter pleas.

Robert Sheridan, attorney for one suspect, 37-year-old Angela Tene Bufford, said the police case was full of holes.

"It still lacks a couple of things, like poison and murder," Mr. Sheridan told KCBS radio.

Police in 1994 started investigating suspicious deaths of elderly men whose bodies contained the heart drug digitalis — a natural poison derived from the foxglove plant.

In one case stretching to 1984, Nicholas Bufford, 87, married Angela Tene, then 24, within a couple months. Bufford was dead and Ms. Tene had inherited his estate, including savings of \$125,000.

Later the group, which includes Tene Bufford's mother, two brothers and boyfriend, got hold of an apartment house, bank accounts and even a Mercedes belonging to four other alleged victims, all in their 80s and 90s, police said.

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Smart policy, not bombs

MOST ARABS do not support the current U.S. policy on Iraq, because it is based on double standards and a failure by the American leadership to distinguish between Iraq's president-for-life, Saddam Hussein, and the real victims of this policy, the Iraqi people. This distinction is one that most Americans miss or choose to avoid, but one that the Arabs, and others, find hard to stomach.

Unlike the situation during the Gulf crisis and war, when many Arabs sympathised with the Iraqi leader's declared objectives and goals, the Arab World today does not support Saddam Hussein or his policies. We do, however, support the Iraqi people and feel their pain, and that is the source of our opposition to the current policies against Iraq and the American-inspired U.N. embargo.

The U.S. is harming the wrong people, as far as we are concerned.

It certainly is tougher to develop a policy that punishes the regime while freeing the Iraqi people of the suffering caused by the U.S. policy towards Iraq as a whole. A policy that misses its mark will only strengthen Saddam Hussein making him a martyr in the eyes of his people, even though these same people have suffered and continue to suffer under his leadership.

It is in this light that American clamouring for another military strike against Iraq is not only unjustified, it is also the result of a growing environment of anti-Arab and anti-Iraqi hysteria in the United States.

The failure of this American policy also explains the deep erosion in support the United States once shared with many Arab countries when it led the fight to liberate Kuwait, an Arab country, from the military occupation of Saddam Hussein's forces nearly seven years ago.

As the leader of the free world, America has an obligation to recognise when its policies fail, and search for the proper response soon afterwards.

The United States military developed and deployed "smart bombs" during Desert Storm that, we were told, struck their intended targets with precision.

What America must do now is to admit failure, and go back to the drawing boards where it must develop "smart policies" to isolate the Baghdad regime without harming innocent Iraqi civilians.

It will not be easy. But it is a challenge the Americans must face if they intend to win sympathy and support in the Arab World.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AI Ra'i's Hussein Abu Rumman demanded that the government and the 13th Parliament decide on a quota for women's representation in the Lower House when they work out a modern election law. It is a pity to see women with such calibre as Emily Naffa and Toujan Feisal lose their bids to become deputies when they have clinched far more votes than many men who were elected last week to the Lower House, said the writer. Abu Rumman said a quota for women could be considered a transitional measure until the time when Jordanian women have reached a high level of political maturity. Jordanians should stop blaming the failure of the 17 women candidates on women themselves or on men and should consider the present election law as the main factor that caused their defeat, he said. The writer added that the majority of Jordanian society is perhaps not yet ready to accept the idea of women serving in parliament and for this reason the quota for women is quite essential for the time being in order to give eligible women an opportunity to contribute to serving the nation.

AI Ra'i's Samir Qatani, addressing the recent U.S. decision to impose sanctions on Sudan said it is really astonishing to see Washington taking such decision, two months after the U.S. administration decided to return its ambassador to Khartoum and at a time when Sudan itself is being exposed to attacks and interference in its affairs by its neighbours. Sudan is now subjected to further sanctions while Israel, which uses chemical weapons to try to assassinate people in Amman, escapes any retribution, and in fact enjoys further support, said Qatani. In his view, the Americans resorted to imposing heavier sanctions on Sudan in order to abort its recent attempts on rapprochement with Egypt and to make it clear to the Arab Nation that Washington has the power to humiliate any Arab country at will. The writer said the Arabs themselves are to blame for this humiliating situation because they are divided and incapable of protecting their own national interests.

Washington Watch

No peace, no business

By Dr. James Zogby

THE NEGOTIATING positions that the Israeli side brought to Washington last week, and one might add, the negotiations themselves, stand in stark contrast to the very logic supposedly underlying the Fourth Middle East/North Africa (MENA) economic summit due to take place in Doha.

The position of the Netanyahu government going into the Washington talks was initially framed in a formula. From their side, the Israelis indicated they were willing to consider: 1) a slow down in settlement expansion — not a halt; and 2) reopening discussions of the nine subcommittees formed to implement the annexes to the Hebron agreements (regarding the Gaza port, airport, safe passage, etc.). What they wanted in exchange was a Palestinian agreement: 1) not to press for any new Israeli redeployment in the West Bank; and 2) to convene accelerated final status talks.

When the Palestinian negotiators balked at these formulations, the Israelis, in their public comments, resorted to blaming the Palestinians for the impasse.

At week's end, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded to know what the Palestinians were willing to offer as a "concession" for Israel to agree to their concession that they "limit" (not halt) settlements. What all these Israeli antics amount to is a nullification of the very logic and details of the Oslo accords. To make the matter clearer, Zalman Shoval, the head of the Likud's Foreign Affairs Committee, in a Washington address last week stated that the Oslo agreement "can no longer be considered a relevant framework for the Middle East-Israel peace process."

The Israeli tactic of affirming acceptance of Oslo while simultaneously refusing to implement its most basic provisions or insisting on renegotiating what was to have been implemented is now understood by all sides.

The Palestinians lack the leverage to force a change in the Israeli position; Israelis, themselves, are engaged in a bitter debate about their government's policy: the U.S. is deeply

frustrated with this Israeli obstructionism but has so far not directly and publicly confronted it; and the Arab World, while angry, has taken no clear stance in the matter since the 1996 Cairo Arab League Summit.

Which brings us to the upcoming Doha event. Partly out of a concern for the Qatari hosts, but mostly out of a fear of the negative repercussions both domestically and internationally, the U.S. has insisted that the summit be held and has worked doggedly to increase participation.

It was clear early on, however, that no real business could be done at the summit. Businesspeople know when there are opportunities and when conditions are promising and when they are not. In the current stalemate, the hope that drove earlier summits is absent. If businesspeople with deals in mind do not come to Doha or dominate its agenda, politics will. And given the current environment, political speeches will be markedly different from those that characterised the founding Casablanca event.

Recognising these realities, the U.S. debated the matter, but resolved to go forward with the summit, concerned that a cancellation or postponement would doom not only this event, but future summits as well.

What is ironic, of course, is that it was Oslo that made Casablanca, Amman, Cairo and now Doha possible. And while the Netanyahu government rejects the principles of Oslo and the obligations it imposed on them, they expect the Arabs to continue to behave as if the path towards peace and normalisation continues. This is a unique characteristic of Israeli negotiating tactics.

At the beginning of the process, then U.S. Secretary of State James Baker urged the Arab states to rescind their secondary boycott against Israel on the condition that Israel would freeze settlements. The Arabs did, the Israelis did not. In Oslo, the Palestinians accepted the legitimacy of Israel and agreed to a phased interim approach to peace in exchange for a mutual agreement that neither

party take unilateral steps that would predetermine the final status of peace. Throughout the entire four-year history of Oslo the West Bank has witnessed an explosion of Israeli settlement construction and land confiscation unparalleled in any previous four-year period.

And now, Netanyahu returns to the Palestinians with yet another demand:

"If Israel is asked to take limitations on settlements, we must ask what limitations the Palestinian side suggests for itself."

Notwithstanding, the very correct critique of Palestinian Legislative Council member Hanan Ashrawi that Palestinians should "not be asked to pay a price for Israel to stop illegal activity," the fact is that Palestinians and Arabs have already paid the price for the never ending settlements in three previous rounds of negotiations.

It is as if the Israelis began bidding for an object at eight and agreed to compromise with the seller at four. Then after the deal was done, they insisted on reopening the negotiations and brought the price down to two. After a while, they succeeded in reopening the file and renegotiated the price down to one and are now demanding yet again to renegotiate and insist that the Arab side agree to compromise and accept less than one. All for the same object!

This penchant of Netanyahu to reopen old files and insist that only one side honour commitments while insisting that all old agreements be renegotiated is what the current impasse is about.

The Arab response must be clear and firm. To send low level delegates to Doha or to quietly object sends no message at all. If Arab states were serious about their resolutions at the Arab League's 1996 summit, and if they truly seek to protect the integrity and gains of the peace process, they will send a principled message of "no peace, no business as usual" to Doha next week.

Syria's quest for security

By Jubin Goodarzi

SINCE THE Clinton administration took office four years ago, the two main strands in its policy towards the Middle East have been to guarantee the free flow of Gulf oil through the containment of Iraq and Iran, and concomitantly to safeguard Israel's security by encouraging its Arab neighbours to conclude separate peace treaties with it. However, on both fronts, these policies have met with limited success, at best.

While the crippling U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq have cost the lives of an estimated 1.3 million people in that country, Iran has been able to stave off total isolation, despite Washington's persistent efforts, by pursuing an activist foreign policy to cultivate ties with various states and rebuild its economy and armed forces. In the Arab-Israeli arena, with the notable exception of the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel of October 1994, the Oslo accords seem to be a dead letter and the situation more volatile than ever, in part due to the administration's overt support for Tel Aviv and total disregard for Palestinian rights and aspirations.

The U.S. has also explored various options to coax Syrian President Hafez Assad to reach a modus vivendi with Israel, while concurrently attempting to persuade him to sever his close links with Iran. One means of achieving these dual objectives has been to encourage the budding friendship between Israel and Turkey since early 1996 in order to press Assad to follow in the footsteps of King Hussein, and also to develop an effective counterweight against Syrian-Iranian designs in the region. Ironically, recent events demonstrate that the emergent Israel-Turkey axis has had the opposite effect, strengthening Syrian resolve not only to continue its long-standing friendship with Iran, but also to forge a new region-wide front against the U.S., Israel and Turkey.

Frightened by Israel and Turkey

Although the Syrian leadership abandoned its ambition of achieving "strategic parity" with Israel some years ago, since 1996 it has exerted great effort on the creation of a new "strategic consensus" in the Middle East in order to confront this new "menace." Following the impasse in peace negotiations between Syria and Israel in February 1996, Assad was greatly alarmed by the conclusion of a military agreement between Israel and Turkey which gave Israeli naval vessels access to Turkish ports and provided for joint military training and exchange programmes between the two sides. The deal was reached during a secret visit to Israel by Turkey's deputy chief of staff, General Cevik Bir. Moreover, Israel's "Operation

Grapes of Wrath" in Lebanon in April 1996 (which left over 200 Lebanese civilians dead and caused the temporary displacement of almost half a million others) coincided with the first joint military exercises between the Turkish and Israeli air forces at Akinci airbase near Ankara. Tensions were further heightened the following month with the election victory of Benjamin Netanyahu, who vowed never to surrender the Golan Heights to Syria.

These events accentuated Assad's concern that Syria was being outflanked and made vulnerable to attack from both north and south for the first time in its history. From his perspective, this formidable new axis represented a major threat to Syria's national security and Arab and Muslim interests in the Middle East.

Consequently, Assad adopted a two-track strategy to neutralise the perceived threat from Turkey and Israel. On one hand, Damascus actively pursued a policy of drawing the attention of its Arab neighbours to the potential challenge posed by their alliance in order to create a new pan-Arab consensus and develop a common stand to contain it. On the other hand, in view of its alliance with Iran over the past 18 years, Syria launched a series of diplomatic initiatives to bridge some of the major differences between Iran and its Arab critics to create a regional bloc against what it saw as one of the most alarming developments in recent decades. This campaign began in earnest immediately after the Arab summit in Cairo in June 1996, when Assad despatched Foreign Minister Farouq Sharaa to mediate between Iran and the Arab Gulf states and also took steps to thaw Egyptian-Iranian relations.

Looking to Saddam

A year later, Assad decided to add a third "track" to his overall strategy by beginning a gradual rapprochement with Iraq. While this new dimension in Syrian foreign policy is not intended to lead to rapid full normalisation of relations with Baghdad, it is aimed at defusing tensions to a certain degree and establishing cooperative links in various areas, excluding political and military. By providing Iraq with some tangible benefits, and a stake in limited normalisation of relations, Assad is hoping to secure his eastern flank and increase his leverage by playing the "Iraqi card" against Turkey and Israel.

Syria has continued to pursue this strategy with greater vigour in light of the ever-expanding relations between Turkey and Israel, the explosive situation in Palestine, and Turkey's military incursions into northern Iraq. The Syrians were dismayed by the conclusion of further agreements between Tel Aviv and Ankara, including a \$630m pro-

gramme for upgrading the Turkish air force's 34 F-4 Phantoms by Israel Aircraft Industries, and more recently talk of coproduction of several hundred Israeli-designed Merkava tanks in Turkey. Furthermore, with the collapse of the Erbakan government in Ankara, Turkey has become more vocal in its denunciation of Syria, again accusing it of harbouring the PKK.

Last June, Syria opened its borders with Iraq for the first time in 15 years and received an Iraqi economic delegation. This was followed by further exchanges to strengthen economic and trade relations and arrange the despatch of medical and food supplies to famine-stricken Iraq. Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddan defended these actions: "We believe that putting an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people has become a moral responsibility. What is always painful is that sanctions targeting the regimes burden the nations." He also underscored Syria's concern about the Ankara-Tel Aviv axis by declaring that "this alliance is more dangerous to the security and stability of the region and to the Arab World than the Baghdad Pact." Both Syria and Iraq also discontinued the transmission of hostile radio broadcasts against one another.

In the wake of the Turkish invasion of northern Iraq last summer, Khaddan flew to Iran to discuss the implications of Turkey's actions and its nascent partnership with Israel with Iranian officials and coordinate policy. Not surprisingly, the director-general of the Iranian foreign ministry's Middle East and North Africa bureau, Mohammad Kazem Khonsari, issued a statement welcoming Syria's openness towards coming Syria's openness towards Iraq in order to ease the suffering of the Iraqi masses, and reiterated Tehran's commitment to Iraq's territorial integrity in view of the recent Turkish military operations. An Iranian envoy was also despatched to Baghdad to submit an invitation to Saddam Hussein to attend the OIC summit scheduled to be held in Tehran this December.

Assad in Iran

More significantly, on July 31, Assad himself made an unscheduled state visit to Tehran to discuss the Turkey-Israel alliance. Ankara's recent moves in northern Iraq, and prospects for reconciliation between Iran and key Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iraq. This was Assad's second visit to Iran since the revolution in 1979 (his first visit during the Gulf crisis in September 1990 was aimed at ensuring that Iran would not side with Iraq against the coalition).

Besides trying to coordinate policies on the above issues, Assad was eager to assure himself that the new Iranian president, Mohammad Khatami, would make no radical departures in the Islamic Republic's foreign policy, such as abandoning

its strategic alliance with Syria. Although Assad and other senior Syrian officials have repeatedly denied that the main thrust of Syria's current diplomacy is to establish a Syrian-Iraqi-Iranian axis, or formalise the close cooperation between Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia by concluding a military pact, Damascus' ultimate objective is to create a united front to thwart Washington's agenda in the region and limit the efficacy of any Turkish-Israeli action directed against it. For example, in recent weeks Syrian officials have persistently urged other Arab governments to boycott the forthcoming regional economic conference in Doha to signal their displeasure at the behaviour of Israel and its allies.

In addition, Russia has been encouraging a reconciliation between Syria, Iraq and Iran because of Washington's dominant position in the Middle East and its staunch support for the Turkey-Israel alliance. Due to the growing tensions with Israel and the marked deterioration in relations with Turkey over the past year, Syria has been devoting greater resources to its military capabilities by boosting defence spending (by \$1bn. from 25 to 37 per cent of GDP), and has approached the Russians to upgrade its air defence network and supply it with new military hardware for its ground forces and state-of-the-art fighter planes, including additional MiG-29s.

Assad's overall policy for enhancing Syria's security, regional stature and room for political manoeuvre has three main components. The linchpin of his strategy is to create a strategic consensus among several key actors in the region (Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and to a lesser degree, Iraq) to bolster his bargaining position vis-a-vis Washington and Tel Aviv: the primary offensive element — the sword — to punish the Israelis for their intransigence is continued support for Hizbollah in Lebanon without becoming directly involved in a military confrontation with them; and the defensive component — the shield — is the modernisation of Syria's armed forces and development of non-conventional weapons (including long-range missiles and chemical and biological weapons with assistance from Russia, Iran and North Korea) to deter the Israelis from contemplating a first strike against Syria. Assad is not seeking a military confrontation with Israel, and would prefer to regain the Golan Heights through a negotiated settlement. However, he is disillusioned with the Netanyahu government and is highly sceptical of the Clinton administration's willingness to adopt an even-handed approach. His recent moves clearly indicate that he has no intention of being cowed into submission by the U.S.-Israeli-Turkish camp.

Middle East International

IT OCCURRED TO ME...

Solace in an idealised past

By Ali Kassay

AFTER LONG and serious reflection I have come to the conclusion that science fiction is one of my favourite types of entertainment. When you think of it, its evolution is, in itself, an interesting story.

It all started with the industrial revolution, when man realised that machines are more reliable and cost-effective than his fellow man. Since then, breakthroughs in science and engineering came thick and fast and transformed people's lives at an ever accelerating rate. People soon became convinced that science, not faith, held the answers to man's problems.

Naturally, men of letters started fantasising about the wonders that science would introduce into our lives, fulfilling man's greatest ambitions, starting with the greatest of them all: Immortality. The story of Dr. Frankenstein's attempt to overcome death became a classic, partly because it carried the note of caution that science can have its limitations, and that some forces in this world are like soup in a cheap restaurant: It is better not to stir them.

The act of projecting the imagination into the future aroused more than sanguine confidence in the good times ahead. It gave rise to man's great fear of the unknown. After all, we were becoming so clever at making machines, particularly ones that do our fellow man a bit of no good. So who was to say that there were not others in the great universe beyond that were even cleverer than us at this? What if one day they came for a visit, and started behaving towards us rather like we do whenever we stumble upon a human community less capable of harm than us?

The SCI-FI library became obsessed with the macabre theme of advanced aliens coming to earth with nefarious intentions, a prospect so gruesome that some writers sought comfort in modifying the theme to one where a contemporary human visits an idealised and peaceful past, and uses his advantage to the benefit of all concerned. One of the nicest films of this genre was "Back to the future" which rightly became an instant success.

Ironically enough, life often imitates fiction. What I mean to say is that SCI-FI writers are not the only ones to seek solace in an idealised past.

Individuals and communities can also indulge in this exercise, and often they do. In our society, for instance, disenchantment with the present and the prospect of more of the same to come, has become such that a group of people sought to turn back to the 7th century, when our nation achieved its greatness, and simply stay there. The notion that exogenous factors now are different from those that favoured our success in the 7th century, is unpleasant so it is ignored.

But today we can safely say that Jordanians have expressed themselves against such specious logic. The people have spoken and their collective voice has clearly said: "We do not believe that going back thirteen centuries would be adequate. Instead, as we have indicated by voting on a tribal basis, we want to go farther back to the noble mores of the Jahiliya."

The act of taking fiction and improving upon it in real life suggests to me a slogan for our social progress: "Forward into the past."

Practicing exile : A reflection on the Jewish exile and the new diaspora

By Marc H. Ellis

IN 1988, at the height of the Palestinian uprising, I had a peculiar and startling dream, one I will never forget. The leading Jewish intellectuals and religious leaders of our century were brought to Israel to share their ideas about what was to be done concerning the crisis facing Israel. One by one, each testified in front of a distinguished panel of judges made up of the prime ministers of the state since its inception. It was quite a scene: Hannah Arendt, Judah Magnes, Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, Albert Einstein, among others, speaking before the legendary David Ben-Gurion, the irascible Golda Meir, as well as Yitzhak Shamir, Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres. Contemporary Jewish intellectuals were also invited, and again the roll-call was formidable — Abraham Heschel, Bernard Lewis, Michael Walzer, Noam Chomsky. Somehow I was invited and, because I was an afterthought, I was last to testify. The room was large, with a conference table where the prime ministers sat. At the head of the

Primary among them is that the future of the Jewish people is being decided at this moment in history, that the crisis is more than ephemeral and strategic: Jewish history is being radically changed in the empowerment of Israel and the legitimization of that empowerment by Jewish leadership in Israel and America. A corollary to this dramatic fact is that Jewish leaders have an incredible responsibility in light of this decisive moment. If Israel, like any state, has a certain logic about it with regard to power, then the role of the intellectual and religious leadership to legitimise or call to account that power, is decisive. Of course, for most of Jewish history, intellectuals, and by extension religious thinkers and actors, have operated outside a state framework or, especially since the Enlightenment period, within states where Jews were a marginal and even despised minority. If some of these leaders were advisors to power, they acted so as representatives of their own people and most were keenly aware that their own survival and that of their people was as much at stake as the power of the state they

have asserted from the beginning: that the war was fought for an independent Jewish state, and that independence and the Jewishness of the state depended on the cleansing of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from what became Israel. Though one cannot change history, the embrace of history is more difficult after its complexities and atrocities have been uncovered. For Jews the difficulty of our day, reconciling the vision of Israel with its beginnings and its unfolding, is becoming more and more difficult. That is why where once there was a ferocious cry on Israel's behalf when criticism was raised, today there is an eerie silence. Backing Israel has retreated from the public arena to backdoor politicking. There is little attempt to assert or shore up a narrative of Israel as innocent and redemptive. Even in the formation of Jewish identity in the West, Israel's presence is changing and becoming a silent rather than vocal partner. At Hill houses across the country, Israel is simply assumed as fundamental to Jewish identity without exploring the details of its formation and existence. These details, including the present political climate and the similarity of Labour and Likud policies over the years, especially in relation to the displacement of Palestinians and occupation of Palestine, are too difficult to raise without challenging the identity that rabbis and other Jewish leaders attempt to inculcate in university educated Jews. Thus the "truth" squads, students trained to confront "anti-Israel" speakers on campus. How often they become silent when those who are deemed anti-Israel speak in a complex and moving way about the future of the Jewish people and the hope, indeed the necessity, of a reversal of occupation and a just and equal reconciliation with the Palestinian people.

What is missing is justice, not simply for a year or a decade, or even the approaching sixth decade, but the possibility that the displacement of the Palestinian people will become permanent.

Within the assimilation to power and the state, a new Jewish exile has formed, perhaps the last exile in Jewish history.

process, and both can be celebrated by the Jewish world, as the aftermath of the 1967 War and the 1993 Oslo agreements testify to. When a permanent displacement takes place within the context of celebration — with Jewish intellectuals and religious leaders orchestrating the cheers — then a serious flaw in reflection and commitment is exposed. If our sense of self and Jewishness is dependent on victory or evolves in an announced or unannounced victory, a victory which consigns millions to wander and to exile, then one wonders what the content of Jewish life is and will be. Our fight against assimilation, so prominent in Jewish discussions and typically involved with the question of intermarriage, is a false fight if we have already assimilated to power, to the state, and to victories that involve the creation of a Palestinian diaspora.

Renewal and justice can be silently joined, but the central question remains, surrounds us without being voiced, and when spoken, startles us. Yet as time moves on, will the ability to ask the question remain, or will the impulse to live in an interdependent empowerment languish? If the question is unasked for decades and then generations, or if those who ask it are themselves exiled, will the ability to speak for justice atrophy? If justice for Palestinians is stricken from the agenda, will Jews be able to speak about justice in other arenas? If the question of justice is silent, or because of the shrinking of our own responsibilities with relation to a territory and government that Jews support and control, the call for justice is emptied of substance, what basis will there be for Jewish life?

What will happen has already happened without articulation or fanfare or even definition. Within the assimilation to power and the state, a new Jewish exile has formed, perhaps the last exile in Jewish history. Or rather, this exile joins others in a new diaspora with people from all over the world, from all religions and ideologies and including Palestinians, sometimes thrown, sometimes chosen. No matter, the exile grows and the possibility of it becoming a diaspora is before us. The movement from exile to diaspora is significant, as diaspora signifies an attempt to form community and culture and fuse ideals and values into a new configuration. Thus a condition of exile becomes an opportunity and its pain an affirmation. In this diaspora, exiles who are "others" begin to recognize a common plight, a shared despair about the world and their own people, a shared hope to forge a different world for their children. The diaspora is a fusing of necessity and opportunity, where despair becomes hope and fear, courage.

Perhaps this is what my dream was actually about, the last hope to speak to my own people, to begin with others to turn toward justice and avoid what now seems inevitable. Could it be that the ability to speak truth to power is already a witness to this diaspora, where values within the Jewish tradition, strained and atrophied under the assault of injustice and the state, are fused with support and values coming from others suffering in their own way a similar assault? Realistically speaking, how could I hope that a Jewish state would respond differently to my critique than any other state would, as if moral suasion could override the imperatives of the state? Are presidents and prime ministers of any state guided by traditions and values that challenge power and give priority to the suffering, the displaced and the poor, as if everything, an entire history of suffering and struggle, an ethical base from which to judge the world and establish the possibility of harmony within and among peoples, is at stake?

In the dream the gun is pointed, fired, but the chamber is empty. When I fall to the ground a profound silence surrounds me. But what next? To seek the prime ministers again for another round of discussions? Perhaps. To seek the other intellectuals and religious leaders, those who testified as I did and those who did not? At times. But the dream seems to lead somewhere else. "Leave this house but also begin again, somewhere," the dream seems to speak. "Go with those who want another way and will walk with you, who will pursue a way of thought and activity that leads to a discipline requisite to the times in which we live."

Walking away and toward, in the profoundest solitude and solidarity, a life awaits beyond complexity and renewal. Where the dream leaves off, life begins anew, and we ask each other what we have learned? When the exile begins and the "other" ceases to be other, when the diaspora emerges amid the ruins of traditions and peoples, when a new discipline is fashioned from the discarded, the forgotten, the borrowed, and transformed — eclectic, in trial and error, humorous, and sometimes deep — then defeat is imbued with another sensibility. The tragic is acknowledged and from this comes a quiet strength. That strength often seems to reside in the future, out of reach, utopian, literally nowhere. But the testimony itself may be the forming of a chorus that one day will grow so loud and compelling that even the prime ministers of Israel will heed its voice.

For me that is what the empty gun illustrates: that though the state may continue on its way and the hour is very late, there is still time. When this time is, what will happen when this time comes, if at all, may perhaps be the subject of other dreams. What we know is that the struggle to be faithful continues with and without the dreams that startle us, turn us around, and ultimately encourage us to give everything to the world we have and the context in which we live — here, now, all.

Ellis is a prominent American Jewish writer on theology and critic of Israeli policies. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

What is missing is justice, not simply for a year or a decade, or even the approaching sixth decade, but the possibility that the displacement of the Palestinian people will become permanent.

table was a seat for the intellectuals testifying. The room was enclosed in glass so that you could see the woods outside, and if someone looked toward the room from the outside, everyone was clearly visible. Thus those who testified were vulnerable not only to the power of the assembled ministers, but to the world outside as well. The dramatic setting complimented the dramatic meeting itself: we were clearly there to chart the future of the Jewish people.

After each testimony, the ministers left the room together and the "witness," as it were, stayed in the room until the ministers returned with their considered judgement. Then the witness left the room and continued on his or her journey. I was not privy to the testimony of the others, nor the subsequent judgement, but after an initial nervousness I enunciated what I had been thinking and writing for some years: that the challenge for the Jewish people, indeed the future of the Jewish people, lay in a solidarity with those whom we had displaced, the Palestinian people. I advised a confession of our wrongs and an immediate invitation to Yasser Arafat to meet with the present prime minister in Jerusalem. There a new history would begin, emphasizing repentance, equality, justice and mutual respect.

The panel listened attentively, betraying no emotion or judgement. Then they adjourned. Some minutes later, as I was looking out of the windows at the beautiful forest, an Israeli military guard entered the room. He approached to tell me that a verdict had been rendered on my testimony. At this moment I was completely vulnerable emotionally and, as it turned out, physically as well. The guard pulled out his revolver, placed it at my temple, and pulled the trigger. At that moment I awoke perspiring, and strangely at peace. I had done what I had to do. As it turned out, the gun was not loaded.

There are many possible interpretations of this dream — including the placement of myself with such notable intellectuals — but what remains beyond its vividness are the issues it raised for me.

advised. Even the criticism of state power and the injustice which resulted from it, a speciality of Jewish intellectuals since the nineteenth century, was addressed on the margins. If it did finally threaten power, the result was a larger social and political upheaval that Jews were involved in but did not control. An advisor to or critic of power has certain limitations and certain freedoms when the power is not one's own and the history, past and future, is of another people and state. Though not without consequences for Jews, the role of the Jewish leaders heightened considerably with the establishment of Israel, especially as it was created in the shadow of the Holocaust. Israel is symbolic of many things with regard to Jewish history, but the fundamental issue is one of independence, including the task of charting, for the first time in two thousand years, a Jewish destiny in Jewish hands.

The search for Jewish identity and renewal

What we have done with this responsibility is difficult to assess both because of the short time the state has existed and because we are so near to the history we are in fact living contemporaneously with. The history of the state of Israel is here, now, and before us.

Still the images that are presented us — the tilling of the desert, the heroic freedom fighters, a place for survivors of the Holocaust, the struggle for a new Jewish commonwealth of social and economic equality — have all been tarnished. The victory of the 1967 War has now become 30 years of occupation and settlement, and the "miracle" that is often spoken about in relation to the war has become a nightmare of displacement and internal division that is accelerating rather than diminishing. The 1948 War, a milestone in Jewish history, has in its 50th year become a time of reflection rather than celebration, for Jewish historians confirm what Palestinian witnesses and historians

These young Jews, and many who are not so young, are met along the way in their search, or what can become a search, if the deepest yearnings of a person and a Jew are spoken to. How often does one see the question before Jews — the need for confession and reconciliation with the Palestinian people — begging to be asked, and how often is this question unasked, yet definitive of the moment by its very absence? The assertion of a militant persona, the tough Jew who will override his entire tradition to confront truth, is a Jew on the brink of being lost, of betraying a history of suffering and hope, of defending what we once derided, of emptying the future of possibility.

And yet the question remains, becomes more urgent. The tough Jew is a weak Jew, unable to confront reality and truth, hiding behind a banner that disguises injustice. Those defined as weak are often distant from the community and find their solace and solidarity elsewhere. And why not? The tough Jews, including and especially the rabbis and the Jewish establishment, have taken ownership rights on the tradition and Jewish identity, or so it seems. Thus the future is torn between the "tough" and the "weak," with many in the middle who go through the motions or walk away. When identity becomes a battleground and those in the establishment create a wall around a state that pursues unjust policies, even the places of comfort and dissent atrophy.

What of Jewish renewal, the followers of Arthur Waskow and Michael Lerner, or even Jewish feminists like Judith Plaskow? The attempt to create a new Jewish establishment is understandable, but it is interesting how patronising the argument for peace between Jews and Palestinians can become and how limited the space for reconciliation is among many Jewish progressives. The new Jewish mysticism and politics of meaning, even standing again at Sinai, as important as they are in certain contexts, tend in the long run to make peripheral the injustice which continues even as we cel-

Regent talks to Israel via satellite

(Continued from page 1)

alternative to the achievement of comprehensive peace.

He said the Jordan-Israel peace treaty was a momentous achievement but stressed that it must be seen within the overall quest for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

Describing Rabin as a man of vision, action and ideas who was transformed from a man of war into the foremost advocate of peace, Prince Hassan said the assassination of the late prime minister "leaves little doubt that terror is a scourge which knows no political boundaries."

"Terror is not peculiar to particular people; it is generally a manifestation of the politics of despair

and the economies of despair. It is a grossly insulting act of reductionism to characterise a whole people in this way whether they are Muslims, Jews, Christians or Hindus," Prince Hassan said.

But what is unacceptable is that it is Islam which is almost invariably associated in contemporary media accounts with extremism, the Regent said.

"The very word Islam conjures up for some the notion of 'terror,' particularly in Western circles. When Muslims appear in the press it is usually as the perpetrators of violence. Of course, some Muslims are engaged in terror, as are some Christians, Jews, Hindus, secularists and many others. But the overwhelming majority of people are

honest and innocent," said Prince Hassan.

"Today, we remember with sorrow, Yitzhak Rabin, whose violent death should serve as a singular reminder to Jews, Arabs, Muslims and Christians that terrorism is abhorrent whoever are the perpetrators."

The Crown Prince also stressed that security in the Middle East does not, and should not, only mean the absence of war. It must include interdependence and cooperation to promote socio-economic development, arms control and human rights, he said.

"(Security) means strengthening democratic institutions, preserving the environment and improving the quality of life (and) finding equitable ways of addressing

questions of resource distribution and development."

In order to ensure regional stability, international idiom and international standards must be applied to the fields of security and cooperation, Prince Hassan said. "Clearly, we need a broader definition of security covering not only military factors, but the political, economic and human dimensions," the Regent said.

He said such a definition must encompass the multilateral in parallel to the bilateral issues such as refugees, borders, water, energy, the environment and the status of Jerusalem.

There is a growing consensus on the need for consultative mechanisms leading to the establish-

ment of a regional code of conduct governing future negotiations and the implementation of agreements, the Crown Prince stressed.

He said the objective is not an exclusive alliance aimed at some common threat, but an inclusive grouping aimed at reducing tension and creating norms of reconciliation.

The institutionalisation of dialogue would play a significant role in eliminating the politics of sedition and incitement and the economy of despair, he said. He said a greater awareness of, and reliance on, the political, legal, and economic dimensions of security provide a legitimate and a valid route towards the alternative politics of peace, security and a sustainable future.

In response to a question, Prince Hassan said Israeli officials say they are committed to peace but expressed hope this commitment is to achieving comprehensive peace on all tracks, including the Syrian and Lebanese.

Iraq keeps up defiance, says it is ready for military attack

(Continued from page 1)

Babel, a newspaper run by President Saddam Hussein's son Uday, warned Tuesday that Iraq could break all links with UNSCOM unless its demands are met over arms inspections and sanctions in the form of a written document.

Iraq was looking for the U.N. to guarantee "the neutrality of UNSCOM inspection teams and to set a time limit for the lifting of sanctions," said Babel.

"If not, it will be our right to close the file on cooperation and to rely solely on ourselves and abandon any illusion of a solution through the U.N. because it is no more than an agency of the U.S. State Department,"

Iraq has said only non-U.S. nationals can take part in arms inspections since it imposed a ban on American weapons experts on Oct. 29. It says Washington has been using UNSCOM to keep economic sanctions in place indefinitely.

A U.N. oil embargo in force since Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait cannot be lifted until UNSCOM certi-

fies that it has eliminated Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction.

Later on Tuesday, the Security Council, which has already warned of "serious consequences" for Iraq's ban, was to consider a U.S.-crafted resolution calling for a travel ban on Iraqi leaders who block arms inspections. Diplomats in New York said they expected the measure, backed by Britain, to have the support of France and Russia although both countries abstained from a similar resolution which was passed last month.

But amid U.S. warnings that a military option has not been ruled out, a spokesman for Russian President Boris Yeltsin said Moscow opposed the use of the U.N. to clear the way for an attack on Iraq.

Baghdad has no right to defy the mandate of UNSCOM, Serguei Iastrjembki said on a visit to China. "At the same time we totally oppose use of the Security Council and the U.N. as a cover for strikes against Baghdad and Iraq."

Defending Iraq's corner in New York, Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz on

Monday shrugged off any threat of new sanctions.

"If anybody thinks that it is going to scare Iraq with further sanctions, I am telling him here outright that he cannot scare us because there is nothing beyond what the Iraqi people have suffered," he told reporters.

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan held out the possibility that Mr. Aziz could address the Security Council and make a case for ending the embargo if Iraq backed down on the issue of inspections.

Keeping up the mood of defiance in Baghdad, around 1,000 students demonstrated Tuesday outside offices of the U.N. Development Programme, pledging their support for President Saddam Hussein and to defend Iraq.

While youths continued to line up to volunteer for the "Fedayeen [fighters] of Saddam," a paramilitary force, hundreds of families have camped at the main presidential palace in Baghdad to act as human shields.

NCP chief confirms Fayeze resignation

(Continued from page 1)

two months. President of the NCP Steering Committee Akef Fayeze, one of the founders of the pro-government group when it was established from the merger of nine parties in May, resigned two months ago.

Another prominent resignation, former Ba'athist Jamal Sha'er, who left the party one month ago, said in a recent interview with the Jordan Times that he resigned for "several reasons, and many of them are related to tribalism."

According to Dr. Sha'er,

over 200 members have resigned from the party in the last two months.

"The most important reason [for the resignations] is that the impression of being the party of the state, or even the party of His Majesty King Hussein, hence, it portrayed itself as being able to guarantee a position in the state to those with no position, or a piece of the national cake to those in business, or a higher position to those who already had a position, like ministerial jobs, or help in the elections by financing the

campaign." Many NCP members realised that such promises, either implicit or explicit, were too grand to be kept, and thus left many disappointed, Dr. Sha'er suggested.

Another reason for resignations is "the complex of the 'second best', a common sickness in Jordan," as Dr. Sha'er put it. "If there is a vacancy in any committee, those who are not appointed in the highest position resign," he said, noting that, on the other hand, "the NCP cannot make everybody a minister or an MP, or a

general."

But there are also political reasons behind some of the defections, Dr. Sha'er added.

Some members joined the NCP thinking that it could be like "the Labour Party in Britain," a catalyst for a centrist-progressive bloc in the political arena, but "they were disappointed by the setbacks and the loopholes in the party's higher cadres," Dr. Sha'er explained, categorising himself as belonging to this last category.

El Al lands in Aqaba for first time

(Continued from page 1)

series of meetings with El Al during which an agreement was reached on a mechanism for joint operations at the airport as well as the fees to be paid by El Al to Royal Wings for airport services.

According to Mr. Abdul Qader Tutunji, assistant director of the Aqaba Airport, all the administrative and security matters concerning the Israeli flights are entrusted to the Jordanian side adding that the agreement allows Israelis for 12 monthly flights to Aqaba.

Airport officials in Aqaba said that 55 passengers disembarked at Aqaba before the Israeli Boeing 757 plane continued its flight to Tel Aviv. According to Mr. Quntar "everything went fast and efficiently. Buses took the passengers to Eilat through the border

crossing which is about six kilometres away from the airport."

He said the Aqaba landing fees are equal to those charged by Israeli airports, which are four times those charged by Jordanian airports, according to Mr. Quntar.

Egypt tightens ban on products made in Israeli settlements

... ..

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Japanese expert sees weak efficiency as a main concern for continued stability

**** A JAPANESE economic expert has expressed concern about the possibility of continued economic stability in Jordan by pointing to weak efficiency despite the large volume of private investments. He referred to a World Bank report that indicated a decline in the rate of savings and in remittances of expatriates. The expert went on to say that foreign funds coming to Jordan may flow through "unstable" official channels.**

In a lecture at the Amman Chamber of Commerce, the Japanese expert said Jordan must handle incoming funds at the highest degree of efficiency. He stressed that industrial development should be encouraged through adopting an official policy that show the government's interest in the private sector activity. Furthermore, the expert emphasised the importance to raise the efficiency for utilising economic resources.

He saw as promising future industries those with intensive capital and technological information in conjunction with appropriate policies. He also favoured setting up chemical industries and serving as a focal point in the region. The expert deemed it important to encourage industries that require machines and equipment but employ few workers to manage and supervise the factories.

The lecture said Jordan can become a financial centre competing with other centres. "The Kingdom can also benefit from the flow of information, especially coming through the Internet," he added noting that Jordan's geographical location can enable the Kingdom to become an advanced tourism centre after achieving a peaceful settlement in the Middle East.

"By adopting appropriate tax policies and giving tax exemptions for certain periods and by lowering the charges for leasing land in addition to setting up water and electricity networks as well as ports, Jordan can achieve economic development," the lecturer said.

The Japanese expert asked the government to clarify its short and long-term economic policies and urged reliance on long-term plans which would provide huge profits. He also called on the government to formulate protective policies when Jordan joins the World Trade Organisation.

The lecturer called on the local banking system to attract overseas savings and noted that Jordan has the qualified human resources that can contribute to achieving economic development (Al Rai' + Al Aswak).

Iran carpet exports taking off again after slump

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's luxury carpet export industry is slowly recovering from a two-year slump after new rules allowed exporters to maximise foreign currency earnings.

Leading exporters said the value and volume of hand-woven and machine-made carpet sales to the main European, Arab Gulf and Canadian consumer markets were on the rise.

The rebound, if sustained, would be a major boost for Iran's non-oil economy as the industry is the country's main foreign exchange earner after the annual \$18 billion in oil revenue.

"Exports are rising because of the new export rules...we hope this is the beginning of the revival for Iranian carpets," Akbar Heristchian, president of the 420-member Iranian Carpet Exporters Association told Reuters.

In the last two months carpet exporters have been able to capitalise on new currency regulations that allow them to exchange their hard currency at preferential rates.

The exporters can now deposit their foreign currency earnings with the

central bank which will issue them a trade certificate which they can then take to Tehran's stock exchange.

At the stock exchange they can use the certificate to get some 4,700 Iranian riyals to the U.S. dollar, versus the official "export rate" of 3,000 riyals and the government's own rate of 1,700, the traders said.

The 4,700 rate can usually be obtained only from Tehran's illegal street currency traders.

In 1995, carpet exporters were forced to deposit all their currency with the central bank at the rate of 3,000 riyals, leading to a drastic drop in official exports as firms saw little or no incentive in going through the central bank.

Carpet exporters can also import items from a list of 29 goods against their hard currency allocation, an attractive option given constantly rising prices for sought-after consumer goods in Iran.

"Now with the easing of regulations exports are on the rise. For the past four months there is a sign of increase," said Nosratollah Mahmoudzadeh, director of Asil Carpet Co.

Exports of hand-woven carpets earned Iran \$130 million in the first three months of the Iranian year which began March 21, 21 per cent higher than the same period the previous year, according to government figures.

Government officials are targeting \$700 million to \$800 million in sales this year, versus \$602 million in the last Iranian year which was 35 per cent down from the previous year.

Iranian carpets typically fetch anywhere between 200,000 riyals to 50 million riyals in overseas markets, traders said.

"We faced a crisis because of the constant changing in the regulations but in the last two months it has recovered," said one exporter who said his sales had grown between 10-20 per cent.

Despite the upturn, Iranian exporters will still struggle to recapture market share lost to other weavers particularly in India, Turkey and China.

Managers also admit that they will have to improve their marketing techniques and modify designs to better meet the changing tastes of key European buyers.

"The problem is that the Iranian carpet did not defend itself in the European market. Many Europeans cannot tell the difference whether a carpet is made in Iran, India or China. It is a problem of marketing," said Mr. Mahmoudzadeh.

While in the mid-1970s Iran had more than a 50 per cent share in the world carpet market, this share had now fallen by half, a worrying development for the 2.5 million people directly involved in the industry.

'97 Middle East Technology Show opens today

AMMAN (J.T.) — Under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah, the Middle East Technology Show (METS '97) will open Wednesday at the Amman International Fair Hall in the Marj Al Hammam area.

Thirty-five companies from Jordan and eight Palestinian companies are participating in the expo which is organised by the Jordan Computer Society (JCS) and sponsored by seven information technology and computer companies.

This year's METS, which aims to promote information technology solutions,

seems to be a continuation of the METS '96 concept which carried "The World of the Internet" theme.

The solutions will come as package deals of computer hardware as well as special communications and information software.

Representatives of 14 of the participating companies will give seminars over four days.

Last year's exhibition at the 4,752 square metre hall, owned by Jordan Exports Development and Commercial Centres Corporation (JEDCO), was visited by around 15,000 people, according to the JCS.

Organisers expect the

number of visitors to METS '97 to exceed that figure.

A member of METS organising committee told the Jordan Times Tuesday that this year's expo "aims at updating visitor's knowledge" on what has developed in the fast emerging information technology industry in Jordan.

"Participants aim at displaying the latest products of their companies," the organiser said.

The METS '97 exhibit will last for four days from Wednesday until the Nov. 16.

Bad debts, lack of financial supervision said threatening financial crisis in China

BEIJING (AFP) — Bad debts from the state sector and a lack of financial supervision threaten to push China into a Thailand-like financial crisis, the official media has warned.

"The financial crises in other countries should be a warning for China," the China Daily said.

"It reminds the nation it must open its financial market in an orderly way, paying close attention to certain financial risks and improving policy-making," it added.

China's struggling state sector, where 70 per cent of enterprises are running at a loss and 35 per cent have debts greater than assets, has become the bane of the banking sector.

Although the government refuses to release figures on the size of non-performing loans, officials warn private-

ly that the problem is very serious.

"Only when the performance of state-owned enterprises has been improved can bad debt in banks be reduced," said Zhang Xiaojin from the Research and Development Centre of the State Council.

"As a result, the crux of the matter is to promote reform of state-owned firms," he added.

China has placed state sector reforms at the top of its priority list, with a massive sell-off to workers under way.

But the newspaper warned that non-performing loans were not the only pitfall facing the fledgling financial sector.

"Hot money, or short-term capital which floods high-risk, high-return enterprises, is a factor that triggered the chain of currency problems

in South East Asia," it said. "China must exercise strict control over capital accounts as conditions for opening up renminbi (yuan) business are not yet ripe," it added.

Tao Liming, director of International Finance Research at China's Central Bank, said Thailand and other South East Asian nations lifted restrictions too fast on capital accounts.

He said China would have to exercise caution, for although current accounts are now convertible here, financial regulation and supervision was too weak to allow a further opening up.

"Considering China still has an incomplete financial supervision system and a fledgling modern corporate system, the nation must exercise control over capital accounts," he said.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - (SHEKESANI)											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 11/11/1997											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
346.000	245.000	ARAB BANK	15.0	1.23	10	440	143100	325.00	325.50	+.05	
2.340	1.580	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	5	0.00	11	5350	9554	1.80	1.79	-.01	
3.600	2.760	BANK OF JORDAN	6.3	0.00	16	8000	24040	2.98	3.00	+.02	
1.190	.890	MID-EAST INV. BP.	72.3	0.00	4	8450	5995	1.10	1.10	0.00	
2.660	2.150	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BP.	10.5	5.95	58	60250	160280	2.64	2.66	+.02	
5.200	4.400	THE HOUSING BK.	15.1	3.84	2	900	4545	5.04	5.05	+.01	
1.410	1.050	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	12.0	0.00	7	2775	6244	2.25	2.25	0.00	
4.050	3.430	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	15.8	3.08	98	47536	183007	3.80	3.89	+.09	
3.900	3.080	JOR. INV. FIN. BANK	24.7	0.00	1	100	385	3.80	3.85	+.05	
1.900	.870	BEIT AL-MAL (BEITWA)	.6	16.85	1	750	668	.90	.89	-.01	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 235.40	%CHG: +0.23	208	131551	538616				
2.020	1.590	JOP FRENCH INSUR.	5.3	8.02	7	5400	10137	1.90	1.87	-.03	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 117.21	%CHG: -0.16	7	5400	10137				
2.050	1.550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.1	5.29	14	7681	14389	1.88	1.89	+.01	
3.050	2.300	SHIPPING LINES	14.0	5.42	1	200	480	2.45	2.40	-.05	
1.740	1.150	MID. EAST HOTELS	19.4	0.00	3	1500	1915	1.31	1.27	-.04	
3.900	2.890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	9.6	0.00	4	4825	17754	3.68	3.68	0.00	
1.100	.900	KARMA EDUCATION	9	0.00	1	1400	1316	.93	.94	+.01	
2.230	1.630	UNIFIED CO.	9.1	6.47	3	2500	4250	1.72	1.70	-.02	
.950	.640	UNION LAND DEV.	9	0.00	2	500	350	.73	.70	-.03	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 109.24	%CHG: -0.36	28	18606	40454				
4.450	3.030	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	21.1	3.50	16	6054	19003	3.13	3.14	+.01	
4.140	3.000	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	9.7	2.86	1	50	175	3.50	3.50	0.00	
7.050	5.570	ARAB POTASH CO.	15.1	3.08	2	1100	7150	6.50	6.50	0.00	
11.160	9.070	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.5	8.22	7	1234	13367	10.85	10.82	-.03	
1.410	1.050	WOOLEN INDUSTRIES	9.9	8.77	1	200	228	1.12	1.14	+.02	
3.260	1.330	INDUSTRIAL CONN. AGR.	9	0.00	5	750	1035	1.42	1.38	-.04	
7.150	5.800	JOR. WOODSTOCK MILLS	10.6	3.05	3	983	6419	6.60	6.55	-.05	
4.700	3.040	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	11.6	4.76	9	1420	5964	4.20	4.20	0.00	
2.800	2.150	JORDAN DAIRY	15.5	6.40	3	1822	3616	2.80	2.94	+.14	
1.750	1.020	JOR. PIPES MANFACT.	12.8	4.42	5	1021	5763	5.65	5.65	0.00	
6.000	4.300	DAR ALMAH. DV. INV.	5.6	10.50	1	50	119	2.40	2.38	-.02	
3.850	2.220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	9.9	0.00	13	14000	6580	.46	.47	+.01	
.690	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9	0.00	7	3850	1925	.51	.50	-.01	
1.200	.510	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	1	2550	1505	.59	.59	0.00	
.920	.530	JOR. ROCKWOL. IND.	9	0.00	1	350	441	1.27	1.26	-.01	
3.000	1.850	NATL. CABLE WIRE. MFAC	29.9	0.00	2	314	583	1.86	1.86	0.00	
.890	.530	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM.	9	0.00	9	3200	1908	.61	.59	-.02	
1.670	1.120	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	16.1	5.56	1	350	441	1.27	1.26	-.01	
1.400	.600	KAWTHER INVEST.	62.1	0.00	1	150	95	.64	.63	-.01	
1.880	1.080	UNIV. MODN. IND.	P	.22	30	9168	10789	1.18	1.18	0.00	
1.410	.810	JOR. INDS. RESOURCES	10.8	12.50	7	2450	1980	.81	.80	-.01	
1.070	.810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	15.9	0.00	7	21350	18575	.86	.87	+.01	
2.090	1.340	EL. & RAY READY WEAR	49.6	0.00	2	280	294	1.42	1.41	-.01	
1.330	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.6	0.00	4	1421	1704	1.20	1.20	0.00	
.810	.710	JORDAN STEEL	33.9	6.67	3	7850	5888	.76	.75	-.01	
.840	.570	MID-EAST COMPLEX	7.1	17.24	11	17650	10079	.57	.58	+.01	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 117.87	%CHG: -0.02	155	100237	127184				
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 171.02	%CHG: +0.10	398	255794	716391				
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 11/11/1997											
.620	.370	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9.9	0.00	7	4500	1665	.37	.37	0.00	
.800	.650	UNION INV. 50%	9	0.00	4	6900	1656	.74	.74	0.00	
.570	.360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	12	74700	29880	.40	.40	0.00	
.780	.620	AL-DARABIAN 75%	68.1	0.00	1	7000	3220	.71	.71	0.00	
.840	.320	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	36.9	0.00	10	27000	8760	.32	.32	0.00	
.640	.350	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	11	37000	14800	.40	.40	0.00	
.750	.400	NATL. MULT. ENG. NAWICO	9	0.00	2	1050	389	.38	.37	-.01	
.640	.330	KAWTAR DYES & WOODS	9	0.00	5	4000	1510	.63	.62	-.01	
.560	.580	MID-EAST PHARM. 75%	9	0.00	3	587	580	1.24	1.24	0.00	
1.400	.860	UNION TOBACCO 75%	9	0.00	2	1500	945	.62	.63	+.01	
.730	.550	RABT PHARM.	9	0.00	4	2000	1220	.62	.63	+.01	
.820	.590	NATL. POULTRY	9	0.00	4	2000	1220	.62	.63	+.01	
GRAND TOTAL			63		166537	64727					

1. New 12 months high
2. New 12 months low
3. Stock dividend during the past 12 months
4. Listed during the past 12 months
5. P/E ratio is 100 or more
6. Negative P/E
7. Earnings is zero or N/A for the most recent year

TONIGHT
GALLERIA 1
الماتريكس

TONIGHT
GALLERIA 2
البيتير كلوني

٠٧٣٣٤٣٠ هاتف خلوي

المصير... اول فيلم عربي بالصوت المجهم دولي ستيريو... الفيلم لم يسجل فيديو

ويعرض فيلم hercules في جاليريا الساعة ١٢:٣٠ ٢:٣٠ ٥:٠٠

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Schumacher found guilty but escapes ban or fine

COLNBROOK, England (AFP) — Michael Schumacher had his second place in the 1997 Formula One World Championship wiped from the records but escaped a ban or a fine after appearing before an International Automobile Federation (FIA) disciplinary hearing here on Tuesday.

FIA officials found the Ferrari driver guilty of trying to run title rival Jacques Villeneuve during the 1997 drivers' championship decider at the European Grand Prix in Jerez last month.

FIA's 24-man council decided that Schumacher's actions were deliberate, but they said the actions of the German driver were not "premeditated".

The German crashed out of the race instead, leaving Villeneuve, in a Williams, to become world champion.

In addition to losing his second place, former world champion Schumacher has agreed to participate in a road safety campaign with the FIA and the European Commission next year.

Schumacher said FIA's penalty was a major blow to Ferrari after years of under-achievement.

He said: "It is something I accept due to my mistake. For me it's quite a tough decision losing my second position because for Ferrari to have second in the championship means something."

"But I have to admit I made a mistake and I do accept the penalty."

"The last couple of weeks have been tough for myself not having won the championship for I was confident during the race."

"It's not been easy to live with. I had some sleepless nights, accepting what I had done, which is not usual for me."

"I did not want to admit at the time what I had done. It's important now that I learn from this and I would like to thank the Ferrari team for all their support."

"I am not Superman, but I am not the biggest idiot in the world. I am somewhere in between. I just want to disappear on holiday, relax and learn my lesson."

FIA President Max Mosley said his panel did not consider banning the German from the 1998 Championship was appropriate.

"If we banned him for next season, it would not be a deterrent," said Mosley.

It had been expected that Schumacher would at least be heavily fined for the collision at the Dry Sack curve which ended with his Ferrari out of the race in a gravel trap and left Villeneuve clear to clinch the title by eventually finishing third.

But Mosley said: "The World Motorsport Council have carefully considered all the evidence in relation to the incident and have concluded that although the actions were deliberate they were not premeditated."

"It was an instinctive reaction. If we thought it was premeditated then we would have had to take a very serious

Revised 1997 World Drivers' Championship final standings

1. J. Villeneuve (Can) Williams-Renault	81pts
2. Heinz-Harald Frentzen (Ger) Williams-Renault	42
3. Jean Alesi (Fra) Benetton-Renault	36
4. David Coulthard (Gbr) McLaren-Mercedes	36
5. Mika Hakkinen (Fin) McLaren-Mercedes	27
6. Gerhard Berger (Aut) Benetton-Renault	27
7. Eddie Irvine (Gbr) Ferrari	24
8. Giancarlo Fisichella (Ita) Jordan-Peugeot	20
9. Olivier Panis (Fra) Prost-Mugen-Honda	16
10. Johnny Herbert (Gbr) Sauber	15
11. Ralf Schumacher (Ger) Jordan-Peugeot	13
12. Damon Hill (Gbr) Arrows-Yamaha	7
13. Rubens Barrichello (Bra) Stewart-Ford	6
14. Alexander Wurz (Aut) Benetton-Renault	4
15. Jarno Trulli (Fra) Minardi-Hart	3
16. Mika Salo (Fin) Tyrrell-Ford	2
Shinji Nakano (Jpn) Prost-Mugen-Honda	2
Pedro Pablo Diaz (Esp) Arrows-Yamaha	2
19. Nicola Larini (Ita) Sauber	1

• (Excluded: Michael Schumacher (Ger) Ferrari 78pts)

view.

"It's still a very serious matter and it's a major penalty we have imposed."

"In this particular instance both Villeneuve and Schumacher were under enormous pressure. They had one point between them, they had people shouting in their ear 'he is just one second behind'. The pressure under those circumstances is enormous."

"Schumacher did the wrong thing obviously although all the evidence points to him reacting instinctively. Had he thought about it for one second he would have allowed Villeneuve through."

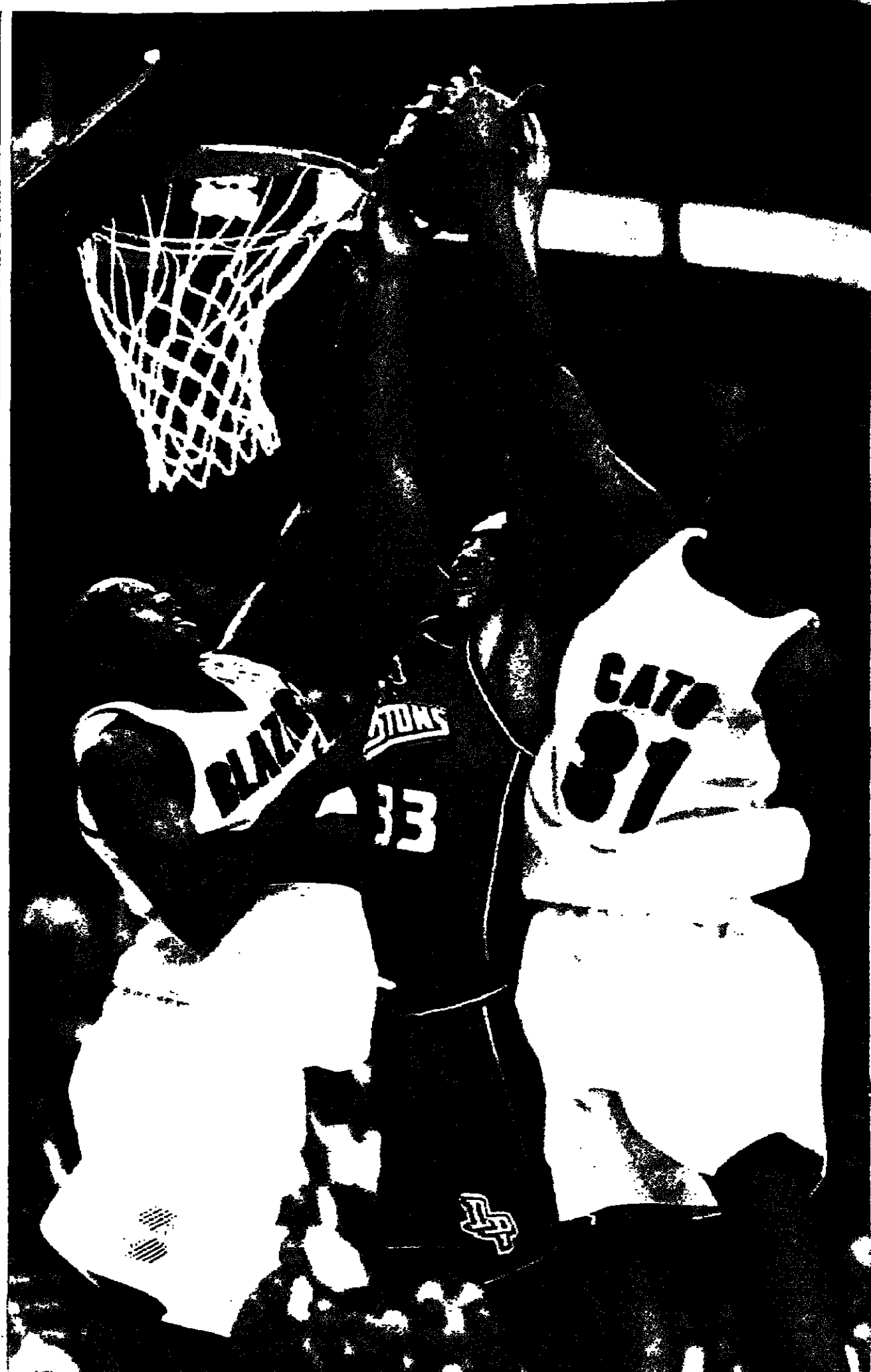
"Schumacher is a human being and every now and then he will make a mistake. He admitted he did it deliberately but instinctively and it was the wrong thing to do."

Schumacher was involved in a similar incident with Britain's Damon Hill in Adelaide in 1994 but Mosley insisted the two accidents happened under different circumstances.

He added: "The accident Schumacher had with Hill was a different type of accident and there was not even enough evidence to suggest having an inquiry."

"Just because he has bumped into another car does not mean a thing."

Villeneuve's Williams' team-mate Heinz-Harald Frentzen, who finished third in the championship, has been promoted into the runners-up spot.



Jermaine O'Neal (L), and Kelvin Cato (R) right, of the Portland Trail Blazers block a shot by Grant Hill (C) of the Detroit Pistons, during the first half of their NBA game in Portland November 10. Portland won 86-82 (Reuters photo)

Pistons lose to Trail Blazers; Spurs win

PORTLAND (AP) — Kenny Anderson scored 15 of his 29 points in the fourth quarter as the Portland Trail Blazers rallied from a 12-point half-time deficit Monday night to defeat the Detroit Pistons 86-82.

The Pistons, who led by as many as 15 points in the second quarter, lost their fifth in a row, their longest skid since Doug Collins became coach.

The Blazers' 5-1 start — it was their fifth straight win — is their best since they went 6-0 in 1992.

Anderson scored Portland's first seven points in the fourth quarter, then clinched the victory by sinking 7-of-8 free throws down the stretch. He also had 11 assists.

Arydas Sabonis had 20 points and 11 rebounds for Portland before fouling out with 4:08 to play, while Grant Hill scored 21 and Brian Williams had 19 for Detroit.

Spurs 100, Raptors 98: In Toronto, David Robinson scored 32 points and San Antonio overcame 28

turnovers and a 15-point first-half deficit to defeat Toronto. The Raptors had a chance to win, but Damon Stoudamire's desperation 3-point shot at the buzzer went in and out.

Robinson hit 12-of-17 shots from the field as the Spurs shot 63.1 per cent from the floor to make up for the turnovers. Sean Elliott chipped in 17 points and Tim Duncan had 15 points and a team-high eight rebounds.

Doug Christie led the Raptors with 26 points.

Hooligans won't spoil England World Cup bid

LONDON (AFP) — Former England hero Geoff Hurst on Monday threw his weight behind England's bid to host the 2006 World Cup, insisting the spectre of hooliganism will not ruin England's chances of staging the event.

Violent clashes between supporters and riot police marred England's 0-0 draw with Italy in Rome which secured qualification for the 1998 Finals in France.

But Hurst is confident that the scenes in Rome would not be repeated if the Football Association (FA) win the race to bring football's premier tournament back to England for the first time since 1966.

Hurst, the only player to

have scored a hat-trick in a World Cup final, said: "The problems in Italy have not damaged our bid at all. We have shown that with the control we have in this country, we are so experienced now in crowd control and ticketing that we don't have a problem."

"The danger is when you go to a foreign country where they don't have the expertise or experience that we have in handling large football crowds and ticket distribution. Then you get problems."

Hurst points to Euro 96 last year as the biggest reason for confidence in England's bid, favourable reviews worldwide and a

lack of serious crowd trouble making the tournament a resounding success on and off the pitch.

"We have shown we can host the tournament. Last year Euro 96 was fantastic, second to none in European Championship history in terms of facilities, football and atmosphere, and there were very few problems," he said.

Hurst also believes that England now boast some of the finest stadiums in the world.

"I think our grounds and facilities are second to none in the world. The new Wembley will be ready by 2006 and I think that the stadiums are vital. There are

no fences, there is a great atmosphere within the grounds, the fans are close to the pitch and people all over the world still regard some of the grounds in this country, such as Anfield, Villa Park and Highbury, as shrines."

"The beauty we have here is that the fans are close to the action. Even at Wembley last year, which is slightly open, with 75,000 there the atmosphere was something I have never experienced."

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Hill banned for taking marijuana

LONDON (AFP) — Controversial Australian Anthony Hill on Tuesday was banned by the Professional Squash Association (PSA) for two months of the PSA tour after testing positive for marijuana at a professional league match in France last May. Hill was also fined £200 (\$320) and his ban will take effect from the start of next month. The suspension prevents Hill from playing the 1997 Mahindra International Challenge and the Heliopolis Open as well as four smaller PSA events in January. The fine brings Hill within 100 pounds of his second cumulative offence violation which would result in a mandatory one-year suspension. Hill, the most fined and penalised player on the PSA tour, waived his right of appeal to the drug offence.

Gayle earns Wimbledon win

LONDON (AFP) — Marcus Gayle lifted Wimbledon into the top half of the table on Monday with a second half winner in a 1-0 Premiership victory at Leicester. Gayle has been forced to take a back seat in Joe Kinnear's plans with the fast emerging Carl Cort recently preferred as Efan Ekoku's strike partner. But an injury to Ekoku gave Gayle the chance to start only his sixth Premiership game of the campaign — and he responded with the decisive goal three minutes into the second period. It was the former Brentford player's first league goal since the opening day of the season when he netted in the 1-1 draw with Liverpool. The Dons victory — their third in the last five games — carried them into ninth spot and they have clearly put their poor start to the season behind them. The goal came after Cort provided a pinpoint cross to the far post and Gayle made no mistake with a powerful header.

Wilkinson's plans get F.A. support

LONDON (AFP) — Sheffield Wednesday's hopes of luring Howard Wilkinson back to the club were effectively buried on Monday when his masterplan for English football was given massive support by the Football Association (FA). Rumours had been circulating that Wilkinson might reconsider his future as the FA Technical Director if his 'Charter for Quality' proposals were not supported by the FA. David Pleat's dismissal last week led to reports that Wednesday were poised to offer Wilkinson the chance to return to the club he left in 1988 after five years in the Hillsborough hotseat. But on Monday the 90-strong Football Association Council gave overwhelming support for Wilkinson's plans for youth development, which includes the setting up of academies of excellence at the country's biggest clubs. Only two council members

opposed Wilkinson's blueprint, and the Yorkshireman said after the meeting: "I am totally committed to the Charter for Quality. This will bring about the rise in football standards that everybody wants and put the players first." FA chairman Keith Wiseman and Chief executive Graham Kelly threw their weight behind Wilkinson's proposals, with Kelly hailing the vote as "an historic step forward for English football."

Ireland call up Spurs defender

DUBLIN (AFP) — Uncapped Tottenham defender Stephen Carr on Monday was added to the Republic of Ireland squad for the vital World Cup second leg play-off against Belgium in Brussels on Saturday. Manager Mick McCarthy called up Carr after injuries ruled out defenders Denis Irwin (Manchester United) and Curtis Fleming (Middlesbrough). Carr, capped 12 times at under-21 level, still has to make his debut for the senior side, despite being a Spurs regular for the past two seasons. Belgium, with a precious away goal from the 1-1 draw at Lansdowne Road a fortnight ago, are favourites to reach the finals in France next summer. But McCarthy remains optimistic that the Republic's excellent away record of recent years may yet prevail. The Irish Football Association have sold all 9,000 tickets allocated to them by the Belgian FA for the eagerly awaited tie in the King Baudouin Stadium, formerly known as the Heysel Stadium.

Bookies fear Lewis success

LONDON (AFP) — British bookmakers William Hill revealed on Monday that they face a massive one million pound (£1.65 million dollars) payout if Lennox Lewis unifies all four world heavyweight titles on or before May 18 of next year. Britain's Lewis announced last November that he wanted to hold all four versions of the title within 18 months, and Hills quoted odds of 500-1 on him achieving that. The odds were then slashed as low as 50-1 when punters started to back him to achieve the feat. "We have now closed the book," said William Hill spokesman Graham Sharpe. "We already have a huge seven-figure liability, and Lewis could win all four by beating Herbie Hide and Evander Holyfield within the next seven months." WBC holder Lewis is hoping for a showdown with Holyfield, who owns both the WBA and IBF belts after securing the latter against Michael Moorer on Saturday.

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THE JAGUAR		PRETTY WOMAN		AL MASEER (Arabic)		MR. BEAN		AL MASEER (Arabic)		ONE FINE DAY		THE SERVICE	
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30		Winner in the 1997 Cannes festival		Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30		Winner in the 1997 Cannes festival		Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		OF PEOPLE	
				Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30		SLEEP WALKERS		Shows: 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30		HERCULES		Starring Hisham Youssef and Amal Dabbas	
						Shows: 3:30, 6:00 only				Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 5:00		For reservations call: 640155, 62152	

Visiting U-21 Chinese table tennis team starts matches Saturday

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A Chinese table tennis delegation has arrived in Jordan as part of a regional tour covering the Middle East, President of the Jordan Table Tennis Federation (JTTF) Ismat Al Kurdi told the Jordan Times.

"The JTTF is happy to host one of the greatest teams in this sport," he said. He said the federation has prepared a packed schedule for the delegation in which the under-21 Chinese team will have the chance to view Jordan's touristic sites and meet several teams.

"During the nine-day visit, the visitors will meet several Jordanian teams from Irbid, Karak, Tafleh and Amman," Kurdi added.

"The Chinese team is expected to contribute positively to the Jordanian table tennis."

"Lack of experience is our major problem," the JTTF president pointed out. "With this visiting team we can start gaining the experience we need," he added.

Although the Jordan national table tennis team took two bronze medals in the July's Pan-Arab Games in Beirut — plans for any regional of international participation were affected by a conflict among the national team's table tennis champs Al Jazireh Club who pulled out of this year's championship.

"We declined to take part in the upcoming South West Asian Games in Iran because simply the team was not ready for any international competition," Kurdi pointed out.

The Chinese team are considered some of the best players in China — as super-power in table tennis.

During the matches held on the occasion of His Majesty King Hussein's Birthday, the visiting team will meet the Jordanian national team Saturday, the Karak team on Sunday and Irbid's team on Monday.

The JTTF year-end plans include the Jordan Open Table Tennis Championship in December and Cup Winners Cup Championship which will be held in Aqaba in mid-December.

Sheringham sits out England training

LONDON (AFP) — Manchester United striker Teddy Sheringham sat out training on Tuesday as Glenn Hoddle's England squad of 25 had their first get-together before Saturday's friendly with Cameroon at Wembley.

The 31-year-old was ordered to join his international squad members even though his club manager Alex Ferguson wanted to pull him out, because of a recurrence of a knee injury.

Ferguson and Hoddle exchanged views on Sunday evening, by telephone, when the United boss tried to persuade the England coach to allow him to withdraw Sheringham.

However, the England coach refused Fergie's request wanting a debriefing with his squad who were together for the first time since World Cup qualification was secured with a goalless draw against Italy in Rome.

But Sheringham, who fired two goals in United's 3-2 defeat at Highbury against Arsenal on Sunday, was one of five players not training.

As well as Sheringham, Arsenal's defender Tony Adams and Manchester United midfielder Nicky Butt were having treatment while Paul Scholes, suffering from a cold, and Gary Neville sat the session out.

Newcastle defender Steve Watson joined up with the full squad for the first time after becoming a last-minute replacement for Manchester United central defender Gary Pallister who is out of the Cameroon game with back trouble.

Qatar vow to shake soccer world hoping to beat S. Arabia today

DOHA (AFP) — Tiny Qatar are confident they can pull off a major soccer upset on Wednesday by beating Saudi Arabia to qualify for next year's World Cup finals.

The winners of the match will secure first place in Asian Group A and a place in the finals in France.

The Gulf emirate with a population of just 380,000 people has already performed an amazing comeback in Asian Group A, after a miserable start to their campaign.

They managed only one draw in the first four matches and sacked coach Jo Bonfrere, who guided Nigeria to the Olympic soccer gold medal last year. In came Bosnian coach, Jamal Haji, who had been in charge of local side Al Ittihad.

But under Haji they have won three matches, 1-0 in Kuwait, 3-2 in China and a 2-0 win over the fancied Iran last Friday that has now got their Saudi neighbours worried.

Qatari team manager Majed Khalifi said: "We started very badly with only one point from our first four matches. But we were improving during the return legs while the others were getting worse."

"We have a last chance to go to the World Cup for the first

time and we're not going to let it go, especially since we're playing at home."

"The most important thing behind our improvement was the psychological factor. We didn't push the players to win, just to give a better showing."

"The other teams were inconsistent. Then we won three games in a row."

Qatar will be without three players suspended after getting yellow cards in the Iran win. But Khalifi insisted: "We're not going to play with just eight players. We'll have a full team."

A draw would be no good for Qatar, who would stay in third spot, and will be only a poor second best for Saudi Arabia.

A draw would mean the Saudis finish the group in second place behind Iran and have to take on Japan in a play-off for a World Cup place in Malaysia next Sunday.

The loser of that match will take on Australia home and away for a third chance to get a precious spot at France '98.

Iran's football debacle kicks off political debate

TEHRAN (AFP) — The Iranian football team's humiliating defeat against tiny Qatar has touched off a hot political debate in the Islamic republic with many calling for a revamp of the country's sports leadership.

Spurred by popular anger over the national team's 2-0 loss in Doha last Friday, putting in doubt its qualification for next year's World Cup finals, conservative deputies in parliament have demanded the sacking of the sports leadership in Iran, all close to the rival moderate faction.

In a letter to President Mohammad Khatami, read at the end of a session of the assembly on Tuesday, the MPs even asked implicitly for the sports officials to be punished.

"This failure is the result of mismanagement at the Physical Education Organisation," MP Marzieh Sadiqi, said earlier.

Several conservative MPs have asked for a probe into the sports organisation, while others have openly called for the departure of its

director Mostafa Hashemi-Taba, a moderate also serving as a vice president to Khatami.

The campaign has provoked a backlash from the moderate-leftwing faction which supported Khatami in his landslide victory in May against a conservative opponent.

The radical Salam newspaper on Tuesday attacked the conservatives and their leader, parliamentary speaker Ali-Akbar Nateq-Nuri, accusing him of seeking to make political gains from the sports event.

The speaker said Monday that the defeat by Qatar had put Iran's "political and national prestige on the line," and called for efforts to make up for the loss.

But the headline Jomhuri-Eslami newspaper blasted the conservatives' preoccupation with football and accused Nateq-Nuri of trying to rehabilitate himself politically after his loss to Khatami in the presidential election.

It also criticized the deputies for fanning football mania "at a time

when many parents suffer from seeing their children go to bed hungry."

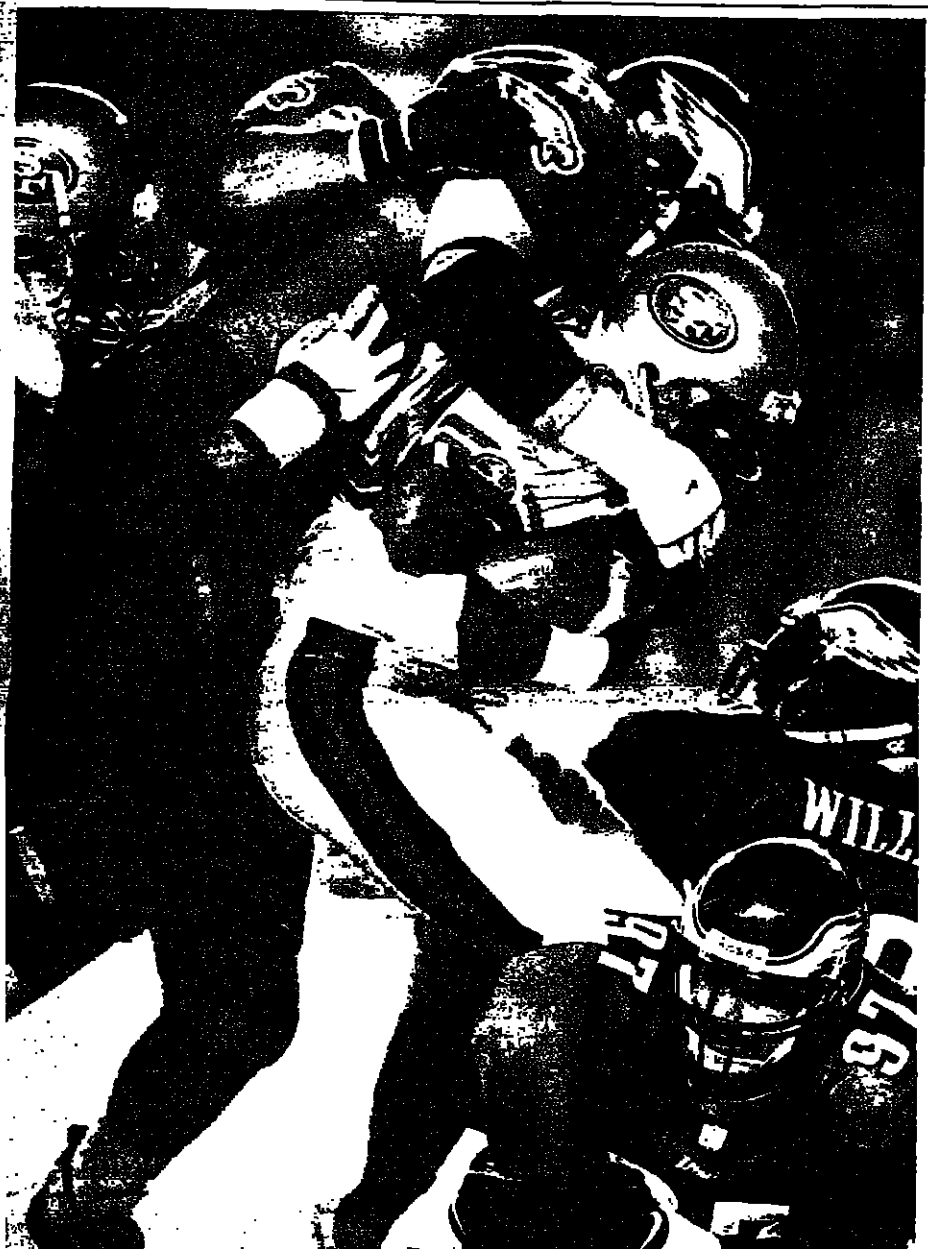
Salam newspaper also attacked the football fever, saying it was being used as a tool to make the poor forget about their problems.

Both newspapers criticized the hiring of a foreigner, Valdir Vieira of Brazil, as head coach of the national team, a first since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Football mania has reached fever pitch in Iran in recent months as the national team, spurred by its German-based stars, seemed to be cruising effortlessly towards the finals for the first time since Argentina in 1978.

Despite Friday's defeat to Qatar, Iran are guaranteed of at least coming second in their group and taking part in a play-off for a ticket to France.

And if Qatar and Saudi Arabia manage to draw their next match, Iran will still qualify automatically.



San Francisco 49ers' Garrison Hearst gets tackled by Philadelphia Eagles Mike Mamula (L) and Rhett Hall, during first quarter action in Philadelphia. Hearst only gained one yard on the play. San Francisco won 24-12 (Reuters photo)

McAllister out of Scotland game

ST. ETIENNE (AFP) — Scotland's Brian McAllister has not travelled to France for Wednesday night's friendly match because he has tendinitis and a leg in plaster.

The 26-year-old Wimbledon defender therefore will not add to his three caps at the Geoffroy Guichard stadium, according to Scotland's media relations executive Andy Mitchell.

Mitchell added Scotland had a one in three chance of playing a match at the Geoffroy Guichard stadium in St Etienne in next year's World Cup and coming to France was a valuable trial run.

Manager Craig Brown, assistant Alex Miller and head of media David Findlay came to France shortly after their 2-0 win over Latvia on October 11, earning Scotland qualification, as a fact finding mission for the World Cup finals.

France were first due to play Croatia, but as they were suddenly involved in the play-offs, France needed to look elsewhere for opponents. As Brown and his team were on the spot, they managed to organize a friendly which offers them a major dress rehearsal for the real thing next year.

Moya stuns Sampras in ATP opener

HANOVER (AFP) — Spaniard Carlos Moya gained revenge for his defeat by Pete Sampras at the Australian Open earlier this year when he beat the World No. 1 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 6-2 in an opening-day upset at the \$3.3 million ATP World Championships on Tuesday.

American Sampras saved a pair of match points in the second set to stay alive and force a tiebreak, which he won.

But Moya, who had won only three matches on hardcourt this year, dominated in the third set to earn the victory in round-robin Red Group play at the eight-man event.

In later matches, Australian Patrick Rafter and Briton Greg Rusedski were playing a rerun of the U.S. Open final, which the Aussie won in September.



Carlos Moya

World number two Michael Chang, who has not won an ATP Tour match since early September, was playing

at night against Spaniard Sergi Bruguera, making a third appearance at the year-end event.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSH

BEWARE OF PRESTIDIGITATORS

Both vulnerable, North deals.

NORTH
♠ A Q 8 8 4
♥ 6 2
♦ A
♣ A 9 7 6 4

WEST
♠ K 10 7 3
♥ A 5 3
♦ 10 9
♣ K 10 6

EAST
♠ J 2
♥ 10
♦ J 8 7 5 4 2
♣ Q J 3

SOUTH
♠ 9 5
♥ K J 9 8 7 4
♦ K Q 3
♣ 8 2

The bidding:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1♠ Pass 2♣ Pass
3♠ Pass 4♣ Pass
4♦ Pass 5♦ Pass
6♦ Pass 7♦ Pass

Opening lead: Ten of ♠

Follow the bidding and play of this hand, then decide who, if anyone, erred. And if so, when?

Against four hearts, West led the ten of diamonds, taken by North in dummy. A heart was led to the ten jack, and West ducked smoothly. Surprised by the "successful" spade finesse, declarer crossed to ace of clubs and led another ♠. East's failure to follow was a

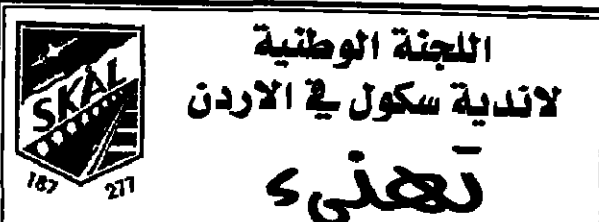
trick five, declarer should have taken the spade finesse. When that wins, the only danger is a diamond ruff. South should cash the ace of spades and lead another. When East shows out, declarer discards a club from hand, cutting the defender's link. Now there is no way for West to get a ruff and the game rumps home.

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10-day Sudanese peace talks adjourns without compromise

NAIROBI (AFP) — A solution to the intractable conflict in Sudan seemed as elusive as ever Tuesday, following the adjournment of tortuous and inconclusive negotiations between Khartoum and southern rebels.

The 10-day talks between President Omar Bashir's junta and the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) were adjourned until April next year "to give time for the two sides to consult with their respective headquarters," the two sides said in a joint communiqué.

Their discussions yielded no agreement on any of the proposals for ending Sudan's 14-year-old civil war.

The main stumbling block, sources said, was the SPLA's determination to link its specific demands to the wider agenda of its northern dissident allies — the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) — who want greater democracy for Sudan as a whole.

The SPLA, headed by Colonel John Garang, wants to see a loose confederation of autonomous states and an end to Islamic Sharia law imposed on the south, where the population is mostly Christian and animist.

While Khartoum was prepared to compromise on the religious issue, it balked at any significant power-sharing with the south.

The government offered only a limited federal system, with power remaining firmly centred in the capital. Failure to compromise on the same issues had led to the collapse of previous peace talks.

The latest round of discussions, under the auspices of the regional Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), were the first face-to-face meeting between the government and the SPLA in three years.

The peace process had broken down in 1994 after the government renounced the Declaration of Principles it had signed earlier the same year.

The declaration called for a referendum on self-determination for southern Sudan, the establishment of a secular state and the abolition of Islamic Sharia law.

Khartoum's decision to resume negotiations this time was widely viewed as a response to the rebels' combined military offensive. During the adjournment period, both sides will remain in contact through special envoys tasked with narrowing the gap on the main points of contention. The statement did not specify who the envoys would be.

The communiqué identified the key issues at the talks which ended Friday as the unity of Sudan, the right to self-determination by for the south and the separation

of state and religion.

"These issues, however, require further deliberations," it said.

Both parties accepted that a military solution could not bring lasting peace and stability to the country and reaffirmed their commitment to a negotiated settlement.

The Sudanese government delegation was headed by Foreign Minister Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, and the SPLA by its second-in-command, Salva Kiir. The IGAD groups Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda. A sub-committee on Sudan is made up of Kenya, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda. Kenyan Foreign Minister Kalonzo Musyoka chaired the latest negotiations.

Foreign ministers Seyoum Mesfin of Ethiopia and Haile Woldemariam of Eritrea and Ugandan Minister of State for Foreign Affairs for Regional Cooperation Rebecca Kadaga attended the talks.

The civil war in southern Sudan has also embittered regional relations, with Gen. Bashir accusing Uganda, Eritrea and Ethiopia of aiding the rebels. Uganda, in turn, accuses Khartoum of backing Ugandan rebels.

The conflict has cost, directly or indirectly through famine and disease, an estimated one million lives in Africa's largest country.



THE LAST FAIRYTALE PRINCESS: This combination of four hand-drawn cartoons shows scenes of the life of Diana, Princess of Wales, which was published in Frankfurt, Tuesday. The children's book entitled 'The Last Fairytale Princess' was published by Austrian writer Robert Menasse and Austrian cartoonist Gerhard Haderer. Illustrations show: (top left) Princess Diana getting married to Prince Charles, (top right) Princess Diana together with her sons, Princes Harry and William, French President Jacques Chirac, U.S. popstar Michael Jackson, Italian singer Luciano Pavarotti, British pop star Elton John and her husband Prince Charles, (bottom left) Princess Diana kissing Dodi Fayed while being chased by photographers hiding in bushes, (bottom right) Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed rushing into a Mercedes limousine in Paris (Reuters photo)

Netanyahu faces revolt in stormy Likud convention

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faced a mutiny by the rank-and-file of his Likud party on Tuesday amid a stormy convention of the party central committee in Tel Aviv.

Mr. Netanyahu's leadership of the ruling right-wing party has been dealt a blow by the "revolt" of the party membership in a debate over cancelling primary elections, the Israeli press said.

The 3,500 members of the Likud central committee overruled Mr. Netanyahu's objections and decided to vote Tuesday evening on cancelling the primaries, which would return to the committee the power to choose party candidates for parliament.

Committee delegates booed Mr. Netanyahu off the stage during his speech to the convention Monday night when he tried to convince them to delay the vote on primaries for three months.

"This is the last thing the prime minister needs at this time, a mutiny by his party convention," said an editorial in the Israeli daily Yediot

Aharonot.

During Monday night's session, delegates forced Mr. Netanyahu's candidate for committee president to back down and put in place their own candidate, Israel Katz, who supports annulling the primaries.

"There is no chance of delaying the vote" on cancelling the primary elections, Mr. Katz told delegates after winning 90 per cent of the votes for the committee presidency.

Mr. Netanyahu was reportedly in favour of cancelling primary elections but was forced last week to back off his position by his own ministers, who reportedly fear the measure will increase Mr. Netanyahu's grip on the party.

For the first time in legislative elections last year, the Likud Party held primary elections among its 200,000 members to select its candidates for the Knesset, or parliament.

Candidates had previously been chosen by the central committee, which had previously used its leverage over

Likud cabinet members to win jobs in their ministries, a power which was lost under the primaries system.

"Now the ministers no longer care about finding us jobs," said one committee delegate Uzi Cohen.

But Communications Minister Limor Livnat, who led the ministers' fight to stop the cancellation of the primaries, said the move would be "undemocratic."

Party insiders have said the move would give Mr. Netanyahu complete power over his ministers and would allow him to purge his cabinet of ministers critical of his policies. Mr. Netanyahu is the first Israeli prime minister to be directly elected, which already gives him unprecedented power over his coalition. But he has been unable to rein in his cabinet, which has often publicly criticised him.

But pushing through the cancellation of primaries could lead to a split in the Likud and the creation of a rival right-wing party by ministers disgruntled by Mr. Netanyahu's leadership, the

press said. "Schism is in the air," headlined the Yediot Aharonot.

"We are going to continue to seek out a compromise up until the last minute," said Deputy Defence Minister Silvan Shalom, considered close to Mr. Netanyahu.

Mr. Netanyahu was reportedly working behind the scenes before Tuesday's vote to convince delegates to accept a delay in the primaries vote.

But even if a compromise is reached, Mr. Netanyahu stands weakened by discontent amid both the rank-and-file and his ministers, at a time when the opposition Labour Party is gathering momentum, the press said.

Labour succeeded in organising the largest ever anti-government demonstration in Tel Aviv on Saturday, attended by some 200,000 people, on the second anniversary of the assassination of Labour Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"At the moment the left is getting stronger, while the right is committing suicide," said the Yediot Aharonot.



\$70,000 flushed in the toilet

VILLAGRACIA DE AROSA (AFP) — A plumber surprised the tenants of a residential building in northeastern Spain by flushing \$70,000 from their clogged toilet drain. The toilet conduit of the six-storey building of Villagracia de Arosa near Pontevedra was stuffed with torn 5,000 and 10,000 peseta bills. The police said the bills were genuine, and began an enquiry to find the money's original owner.

The mystery of the sleeping village

LUCCAY (AFP) — Investigators this week finally uncovered the cause behind a mystery sleeping sickness sweeping this tiny Tuscan village. Judicial sources said a poisoner armed with sleeping pills appeared to be responsible for the malady affecting the inhabitants of Camiglione, which has been given the scientific name of "recurrent idiopathic snoring" by doctors. Idiopathy, the dictionary says, is the medical name given to a disease or condition of unknown cause, or that arises spontaneously. Medical experts in Luccay, the main town near Camiglione, identified nine sufferers of the sleeping illness, eight of them women aged from 43 to 80, who normally spent their afternoons together chatting in a village square.

Indian schoolboy 'stripped' for breaking rules

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Parents of a 13-year-old boy are taking legal action against a New Delhi school after their son was allegedly stripped in public, newspapers said Tuesday. The Times of India said the suit alleged that Rakesh Kumar was stripped by the vice-principal after being caught swimming with friends during class hours. He was allegedly paraded naked in the school. Kumar's parents have accused the principal and the vice-principal of harassment. Their lawyer, P.S. Sharda, told a court on Monday that the boy was still traumatised by September's incident. "The poor child is in a state of shock and still cannot speak," he said.

A rock star gets ferrous with 'a bar'

PARIS (AFP) — A thirsty rock star with time to kill and a closed bar-room door can cause a nasty hangover. When former Jam singer Paul Weller found the bar at his Paris hotel firmly closed, he did what came naturally to many rockers in their heyday — he went upstairs and trashed his hotel room. However, managers at the Warwick Hotel just off the Champs Elysees were not so amused. They called police, and Weller ended up being quizzed at the local station, informed sources here said. He was released several hours later after promising to pay for the damage.

British architect Chipperfield favourite for Berlin museum

BERLIN (AFP) — British architect David Chipperfield is favourite for the job of rebuilding one of Berlin's greatest museums, destroyed in the last days of World War II, museum officials said Tuesday. Berlin's national museums authority said Chipperfield had been preferred to Frank O. Gehry, the architect of the new Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, northern Spain. The New Museum, as it was then known, was destroyed in 1945. Museums head Werner Kopp said he would follow the recommendation and put Chipperfield's name forward when the authority next meets in full session in early December.

Gulf Arab states said to move towards merging their defences

KUWAIT (R) — Gulf Arab leaders are expected to approve next month a plan to integrate command and control defence systems, a first step towards merging defences, military sources said Tuesday.

Final approval would be given at the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit in Kuwait in December, said a senior Gulf Arab officer.

Leaders of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain are due on Dec. 20 to open the annual summit of the political and economic alliance formed in 1981.

"The plan now is to link existing command, control, communications and intelligence [C3I] systems as a first step...other steps are yet to be discussed in detail and are part of the integration plan," the officer added.

The six states, which buy weapons mainly from allies United States, Britain and France, have separately spent hundreds of millions of dollars in recent years on C3 and C3I systems.

They plan to link these systems eventually and install down links to retrieve information from airborne devices like Saudi Arabia's AWACS aircraft.

Saudi Arabia is the only GCC state to operate the airborne warning and control system aircraft, capable of covering the whole region and beyond.

GCC states, whose defences failed to respond when Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's troops marched unopposed into Kuwait in 1990, have a plan for an integrated early warning system covering the entire Arabian Peninsula.

But the joint defence shield is facing some debate over control and sovereignty, official sources said.

GCC states will not surrender independent sovereignty to a single Saudi-based command room but the six states will be divided into eight to 10 air defence sectors all connected with compatible hardware sharing information and able to trigger a response if one sector is threatened, officials said.

They are also seeking to boost the size of a Saudi-based joint force and incorporate naval and air force units into it.

The early warning system and the down links is not out we just did not get to it yet," said a senior officer. "We shall start first with the C3 and C3I."

The sparsely populated GCC states are among the world's leading arms importers. But with large neighbours like Iraq and non-Arab Iran, they live in a "tough" area and will continue to need Western assistance for many years, officials say.

They have a token GCC joint force — Peninsula Shield — of about 10,000 men which can be doubled in case of an emergency.

They plan to double the size of that force gradually. Another aspect of sovereignty differences was earlier resolved with agreement on the periodical alphabetical rotation of leadership of the Saudi-based Peninsula Shield among members.

Italy to probe possible secret service role in Algeria killings

ROME (AFP) — Italy is to reopen an inquiry into the murder of seven Italian seamen in Algeria in 1994 after a British newspaper reported that the Algerian secret services were behind the killings, judicial sources in Rome said Tuesday.

The Observer newspaper on Sunday quoted an Algerian asylum-seeker in Britain as saying that Algeria's secret services had orchestrated the cut-throat murder of the seven Italians in the port of Jenjen. The asylum-seeker, identified as Yousof, claimed he was a former agent in Algeria's secret service.

He also said a string of bomb attacks in Paris in 1995 were the work of Algerian intelligence as part of a black propaganda war aimed at galvanising French public opinion against Islamist militants, a claim which French and Algerian officials refuted.

Italy summoned Algeria's ambassador to Rome to shed light on the Observer's report on the seamen, who were originally thought to have been killed by Islamists. Algeria has dismissed the report, along with allegations that its secret services were behind bomb attacks in Paris in 1995.

The public prosecutor charged with leading the reopened investigation has requested that the former agent be questioned.

Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini warned that although no government yet had sufficient evidence to confirm the agent's claim, any confirmation of official Algerian involvement would "cloud relations between Algeria and the European Union, especially with Italy."

"There would certainly be retaliatory measures against the Algerian government" if the claims were confirmed, he cautioned.

Turkish prosecutor presses demand to dissolve Welfare

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's top prosecutor asked the constitutional court Tuesday to dissolve the Islam-based Welfare Party of former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, saying it undermined the secular state.

Vural Savas was presenting arguments before the court in the latest phase of a drive he

began in May to abolish the party, known as Refah. "No party, in Turkey or abroad, has deserved to be dissolved as much as Refah," he told the court.

Mr. Savas is a prosecutor for the Turkish appeals court. The constitutional court is the country's highest judicial body and empowered to dis-

solve political parties.

Mr. Erbakan was to go before the court later in the day to defend his party.

A coalition government headed by Mr. Erbakan was forced to resign June 18 under pressure from the army, which considers itself the guardian of the secular nature of modern Turkey.

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel's opposition offered up a cool response Monday to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's appeal that the country rally behind his leadership.

And some right-wingers angrily questioned the prime minister's commitment to retaining Israeli control of territory sought by the Palestinians and Syria.

Mr. Netanyahu, in a speech Sunday to about 3,000 members of the governing Likud Party's central committee, struck an unusually conciliatory stance toward his dovish critics, possibly aimed at laying the foundation for a joint government with the opposition Labour Party.

"Our strength lies in unifying around the key things, and putting aside the rest," the prime minister said. "From this stage I call on the leaders of the opposition to calm the people and to work together to mend the rifts."

In his speech, Mr. Netanyahu — who has come under increasing fire both at home and abroad over his unyielding stance toward the Palestinians — avoided his usual criticism of Labour and instead noted its many con-

tributions to the security and development of Israel.

However, Labour leader Ehud Barak rebuffed the overture.

"I am very much in favour of unity in the nation and moving forward together. I think it will be done more effectively...when the government is replaced," he told Israel Radio.

Even while failing to pacify his critics on the left, Mr. Netanyahu drew denunciations from right-wingers who feared he might be signalling willingness to make new territorial concessions.

In his speech, Mr. Netanyahu said that in the negotiations with the Palestinians he will not give up the Jordan Valley or Arab east Jerusalem, but he did not mention other areas of the West Bank which the Likud has been traditionally determined not to give up.

"It means that all other territory is up for sale," said former Science Minister Benny Begin, his leading critic inside the Likud.

The prime minister's spokesman Shai Bazak refused to respond to the criticism, saying Mr. Netanyahu "did not set out his political

programme" in the speech.

Israel is committed under previous agreements to handing over more West Bank land to the Palestinians in November, but Mr. Netanyahu has tried to sidestep that commitment, demanding President Yasser Arafat first crack down on Islamist militants.

That, coupled with Mr. Netanyahu's refusal to halt new settlement construction, has drawn dissatisfaction from the United States. President Bill Clinton has declined to set a meeting with the prime minister during his upcoming visit to the U.S.

About a third of Mr. Netanyahu's supporters in parliament are hardliners who threaten to topple his government if he carries out the troop withdrawal from the West Bank. But centrist coalition allies demanding that the peace process continue also could topple the government.

Mr. Netanyahu's solution has been to offer the Palestinians a deal whereby the expansion of Palestinian autonomy — as part of the existing interim agreements — would be postponed, and

instead the sides would begin accelerated talks for a final peace settlement.

The Palestinians have refused this proposal so far, apparently because they don't trust Mr. Netanyahu to agree to Palestinian independence.

One option for Mr. Netanyahu would be to dump his right-wing allies in favour of a broad-based government with the opposition Labour Party, enabling more substantial concessions to the Palestinians.

The Likud meeting was expected to focus on efforts by Mr. Netanyahu supporters to change the party's primary election system, in which the candidates for the Knesset are elected by the party's estimated 150,000 members. The party leader's control is minimal.

Under the proposed changes, the list would be elected by the central committee, which is heavily stacked with Mr. Netanyahu's supporters.

Mr. Netanyahu and apparently most of the committee members favour the change. But most of the party's cabinet ministers and Knesset members oppose it.